

# THE TOP OF THE WORLD



BY

Welthy Honsinger Fisher

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THE SAHEB TAKES A SNAPSHOT OF THE AUTHOR AND A CLUSTER OF A  
HUNDRED AND EIGHT ORCHIDS ON A SINGLE ROOT

# The TOP of THE WORLD

By  
Welthy Honsinger Fisher



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TO  
MY HUSBAND, THE SAHEB  
THROUGH WHOSE UNDERSTANDING EYES  
I HAVE SEEN INDIA AND HAVE LOVED  
THE MOTHERLAND  
AND HER PEOPLE



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## FOREWORD

IT happened that when we planned our journey to the gateway of Tibet we were in the heart of the jungle in the native state of Bastar. I have therefore begun these chronicles of the journey not from our home in Calcutta, nor from our mountain shack, The Eyrie, in Darjeeling, but from the low plains of India. For India is not only a land of paradoxes, she is a continent. She has colossal poverty and great wealth; warlike Sikhs and Hindus who would not take any life—not so much as to eat an egg; she has great architectural beauty, and likewise seven hundred thousand mud villages; she has humid, low-lying plains—cities like Calcutta below sea level—and yet she has Everest, whose proud white head towers up six measured miles into the heavens—the highest point on the earth's surface.

Calcutta,

1926.





## CHAPTER I

### THE PLAINS OF INDIA

WE had just left the jungle. Whether it was the slight altitude of Jagdalpur, or whether it was the fascination of the jungle people, that made me forget any inconvenience or discomfort, I do not know; at any rate, in all those days I had not realized that the heat was descending upon the plains of India—heat that was simply beyond description. With every chug of the little Overland it was getting hotter. I donned a pith helmet of course; then I added blue glasses that had blinders at the sides as well, in order that not even a crack of light should get into my eyes; after that I wet my head, and, lastly, sat back and gasped for breath, feeling that I was in the grip of a power that no human or mechanical device could overcome.

Somehow I had felt very much at home in the jungle. Every woman, every man, and every boy and girl wore red beads. There were long beads and short beads, fat beads and thin beads; there were beautiful “dog collars” made after the latest Tiffany pattern around many of the jungle dowagers’ necks, but they were all red. I loved them. The hair of all the young girls was parted flat in the middle, according to the latest models from

Paris. The head bands were of *engraved* brass; sometimes they were worn across their foreheads and sometimes across the part about two inches back from the forehead. It was very striking and the young girls were beautiful to look at. Their garments were sleeveless—another similarity to Paris—and the skirts very short. I did not see any fashion magazines, but certainly, as these lovely Maryia girls stood there in the camp light, they seemed to be "*le dernier cri*" from the center of the world's fashion. I kept constantly saying to myself, "Is it possible that these girls know how attractive they are, how smartly dressed they are, and what perfectly modern physiquess they have?" There were so many Annette Kellermans among them that she would be no novelty at all in the jungle!

Isn't it strange that from the literal ends of the earth we have come to the same styles? Twenty-nine years ago, by actual count, when the first British administrator and his wife came to this part of the jungle to administer its affairs, both political and social, the women danced and worked and lived as did the men with no clothes, not even a loin cloth. They were as unconscious as the birds, but the administrator's wife felt impelled to give them a social uplift, and, accordingly, sent for a few tons of white cloth, and taught them how to wear a simplified Indian sari. While our mothers, twenty-nine years ago, were wearing skirts that were four yards in circumference, and trailed on the ground, sleeves that not only covered the whole arm

and half the hand, but were gathered at the top, lined with crinoline, and protruded wing-like for six or seven inches from the shoulder, now both have arrived at short skirts, straight lines, and sleeveless garments. Oh, little fat men dressmakers of Paris, if you want to know where to find the best and most perfect models for your modern clothes, I would suggest the jungle of central India!

When we had reached Raipur, after a drive of one hundred and eighty-seven miles over jungle roads, not even an angel choir could make one forget such heat. It was stifling. If anyone could have done so, it would have been those angel missionaries at Raipur on whose tables I found refreshing magazines and some of the best and latest books. Yet that lovely group sat under the slowly swaying *punkah*, and said, "Why, Mem-saheb, this is only the *beginning* of the heat!" But even as they said it they looked as pale and washed out as I felt.

#### IN THE OLD RAIPUR BAZAAR

There are bazaars and bazaars in India. There is the bazaar of the jungle, where once a week the men, women, and children come by families with their produce, from ten, twenty, thirty, even forty miles on foot, and exchange their produce for that of their distant neighbors. There are bazaars where cattle are sold by the thousand, and just outside, round the corner at all of these bazaars, is the grogshop, where the indigenous

*mahwa*, or *toddy*, is sold. But to walk down the uneven, broken pavement, through the bazaar of Old Raipur City, is an experience. Even the bell and wheel of a bicycle are out of place and far too noisy for silence of the ages which fills the atmosphere. The street is lined with quiet, dignified, high-class shops which one must enter by walking up five or six uneven stone steps. Arriving at the top of the steps, I feel as if I were entering a silent mosque. The shops have no doors and no front walls. There are carved pillars of old teakwood, and these old pillars support graceful Saracenic arches, carved to the overhanging eaves of the roof. As I pass beyond the pillar I enter the old bazaar of poetry. It is summer and the rugs are covered with white cotton cloth. I take off my shoes. Divans of Persian velvet and camel's hair are covered with spotless white. On all four walls hang large mirrors into which one can gaze at oneself to heart's content, and here the customer sits, reclined on the soft, padded cushions, smokes his leisurely *hookah*, and bargains half the day. The beautiful silks and *saris*, the highly ornamental jewelry, and the elaborate turbans are none of them in sight, and never until the social amenities have been attended to, will the merchant think of displaying his wares. Yonder in the distance, as I walk along in this summer night, I hear the chant of the *muezzin* calling to prayer, and in the shop just opposite I see the Mohammedans turn to the east, fall on their knees, their heads on their hands, and repeat, with the sixty-nine





THE MAHARANI—QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE



millions of Mohammedans throughout India, "There is no god but Allah, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

The little village about twenty-five miles out from Raipur, to which we went in the ubiquitous Ford to visit our Christian people, was called Drug (without a drug store in it). Here the Indians came out in their usual courteous fashion to greet us long before we reached their door, and hung garlands about our necks. But these garlands were unlike any of the hundreds I have worn about my neck since coming to India; they were not made of flowers—but of candy!

The local preacher's family had made the sweets, and all but the lower piece in the center were in the shape of the sacred pipal leaf, while the central one was the shape of the tail of the sacred fish. So for an hour I wore the sacred flora and fauna of India about my neck!

### INDIA'S MAGIC HOUR

Just as the hot red sun dropped below the horizon the boys and girls from the schools and the band of Christians from the city gathered on the lawn to give us a formal reception. The original songs and the poems written for the occasion emphasized the fact again that, although India speaks and writes in scores of languages, the heart of her millions breathes forth one lovely song.

Before the gathering had dispersed, dense darkness had come upon us, the stars were coming out, trying to

make up for a late-rising moon, and from three sides of the house servants might be seen bringing an army of beds out of doors. We were to sleep out of doors. Rooms, they said, would be impossible, verandas were little better, and the only hope for a few hours' sleep would be out on the ground. To the north of the house, beds; to the south, beds; and to the east, the same long row. Over each bed was a mosquito net hung on four upright poles about five feet high, which protected one comfortably. The net was thin and fine, and did not harm in the slightest one's view of the stars. Too warm to sleep, I began to figure out one constellation after another until from behind a lacy acacia tree there began to rise from the southern horizon what looked like the Southern Cross. I got up and walked out beyond the tree to see more plainly, and found it to be the false cross, but even then the true cross was slowly rising. There I waited until I had seen this impressive constellation, so perfectly resembling a cross, appear on the southern horizon and then as quietly disappear.

It was difficult to sleep with such a wealth of wonder above me, so varied, so constantly changing, and so brilliant, but once having fallen asleep, I slept until the waning crescent moon awoke me at five.

At nine we took the train, the hours intervening being spent in preparing and assembling the usual impedimenta that travelers must carry in India. Mattresses, bedding, pillows, mosquito nets, cooking utensils, all must go, and must be rolled into bundles not too bulky.



Our tiffin basket, which in reality is an enlarged motor luncheon basket, must be filled and carefully carried. Also our bag of magazines and books which we study en route; and our portable Remington adds one to the number of parcels which we must count meticulously before we turn them over to the coolies.

Still aglow with the beauty of the early morning, we took our train from Raipur Junction. At first glance it seemed impossible that we could spend fifteen hours in that dusty, hot, fanless compartment. But there was not a moment to lose. We called for a sweeper to sweep the floor; we dusted the bunks, the windows, the racks, and in the midst of these domestic labors the whistle blew and we were off. We soon realized the heat was overpowering us. We closed all the blinds. We closed all the windows, and had there been three other varieties of screens, shutters or blinds, they would all have been closed. We shut everything in sight and sat—sweltering, immovable. The hot wind howled outside against the window pane like a blizzard, and we shivered with heat and thankfulness that we were secure from its searing blast. If we lay down, our pillows were soon dripping wet. We had magazines and tried to read them, but the heat screamed louder than the headings of the modern magazines, and we gained little from our reading. At one of the stations we bought fans, thinking these might give us some relief. The most efficient fan, we were told, was that made of the sacred grass of the Hindus. It is made with a bamboo upright

about a foot long. The grass is sewn flat, is about eight inches square, and revolves around the bamboo upright to make the breeze. The grass is fragrant and one constantly waters it to get the best results. The Hindu name in the Royal Dictionary is *kus*, but, strangely, I had never known that fact until I looked it up in the dictionary, for every European calls it *kus-kus*. Whether the original European, trying to give vent to his feelings concerning the heat, strengthened the expression by doubling it, I do not know, but we bought, as you would, had you been in our places, a *kus-kus* fan. The wind blistered, it exhausted, it depressed; it was a battle to merely exist until six-fifteen, when the sun went down, and we dared to open windows and blinds.

There, on either side of the train, lay the tenderest sunset scene in all the world. On every little path through the fields as far as eye could see walked single-file the tiller of the fields of India. Tired but happy he was going back to his village, where he lives gregariously, and where at this magic sunset hour life is just beginning.

### THE TREES OF HINDUSTAN

There is a vast difference between a tourist and a resident of India. I have been both, and I know that although a studious traveler may fail to catch the great heart of India that beats underneath its burdened people, yet one cannot fail to feel the unusual beauty of

her trees. An expert has just reported that there are five thousand one hundred and eighty different specimens of trees in India. And certainly nowhere in the world does a tree come to such complete beauty as in India. It is as though God knew the many weary millions of his people needed relief from the glare of the sun, and a place to rest in the shade during the exhausting heat of the day, and so he placed trees everywhere, and caused them to grow to their fullness of strength, and so arranged it that the leaves would fall a few at a time, that throughout the year there should be continuous shade. If Joyce Kilmer had but lived in India, what poems on trees he would have penned! It is not at all difficult to me to understand why the Indians worship the pipal tree. Larger than a New England elm, fuller of leaf than a maple, tall and stately, it spreads out over a space large enough to entertain a large caravan, and throughout the year never ceases to give its generous shade to the grateful people, weary of their constant battle with the enervating heat.

There is the neem tree, and the banyan tree, a specimen of which in the Botanical Gardens of Calcutta has three hundred and ninety-nine aerial roots, and covers no small part of the garden itself. A regiment could rest under its shade, and a Sunday-school picnic would not need to look elsewhere for a woods, for this one tree would give a picnic ground a forest of more than an acre. India is a land of cows. To anyone coming from other parts of the Orient this is the greatest

surprise, and, for the most part, all cows die a natural death in India, but they bless the people in their labor in the fields and in giving them milk for both children and adults. The cows roam at leisure and nibble the trees as high as they can reach, so that the appearance of all the trees over India is that of a beautiful park where all the trees are trimmed evenly from the lawn. Nibbling the branches when they are young means that all the trees begin to branch out about five feet above the ground. This gives a remarkable and symmetrical appearance, and adds not a little to the beauty of India.

How often I have admired the tree-lined roads of France! How often too I have worshiped at the shrine of that noble cryptomeria avenue at Nikko, up in central Japan! But I had not seen the roads of India. Let it not be thought that the beautiful shady roads of India are alone the product of British occupation. That would be unfair to the truth, for all the old Indian kings and emperors were great road builders. India has from time immemorial used beasts of burden like the cow, the ox, the water buffalo, the elephant, and the camel to carry her burdens and to transport her people. And because India has been a country which used the ox, the elephant, the cow, and the donkey, she of necessity had to have roads, and wide ones, on which they might travel, and from the beginning she planted trees on either side of her roads, until networked over the country, north, south, east, and west, are wide, lovely roads, with the most graceful and heavily shaded trees



GIANT PINES WERE SIGHING A SAD SYMPHONY





in the world, roads that have carried the glory of the long line of Mogul emperors, and that now carry the slow-moving oxcart as well as the swiftly driven motor.

### MY DREAM REALIZED

As the hot winds howled without, I found myself thinking back to America, and of lectures by Mr. Stefansson, the arctic explorer. I remember that he showed pictures of lovely gardens of green grass and flowers in bloom, and the audience said, "What a beautiful, warm country!" and he said, "That is the region of the arctic pole!" And then in contrast he showed a picture of white snowy peaks, and the audience shivered and said, "How cold it must be at the pole!" and he said, "That is not the pole. That is a picture from the hottest country in the world—India."

We live in Calcutta, just nineteen hours distant from the highest mountain range in the world, and from the highest peaks of that great Himalayan range! It is difficult to believe, in this steaming hot city, that another part of Bengal has a bracing, lovely climate, and brings one in constant view of the eternal snows. But it is so. We decided to leave the plains and begin our trail to the "Top of the World."

## CHAPTER II

### I MEET THE PRIME MINISTER OF TIBET

**T**IBET! Lamas, Lamaseries, Lhasa—all locked tight and the key in the closed fist of the Dalai Lama! This had been my picture of Tibet. Shelton's experience had been as thrilling to me as Scott's search for the south pole—and as daring. Shelton had been searching for the heart of the Tibetan people, and it had required bold courage. Scott had searched for that pin prick on the map called the south pole. He had been every inch a hero. So had Shelton. Both gave their lives—I do not know why I had always held them in my mind together, but I had. Both seemed to possess the same high brand of daring that does not give up the search but gives up life instead for the cause it loves.

Although Tibet locks its walls tight to us, she comes down out of her religious and mountain fastnesses, down through Nepal and Sikhim to Darjeeling, the Place of the Thunderbolt, and yes, even to that cosmopolitan city of Calcutta on the Plains.

I suppose the fact that they debar me from going into their country makes Tibet and the Tibetans doubly fascinating to me. It tantalizes me. Are they mystics? What makes them so obdurate? Are they likable? These queries tease me until I am possessed with the

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THE SIGNATURE OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRINCESS  
Taken from the Author's Guest Book



desire to know them, and to a slight degree I have had my curiosity satisfied.

Tibet is literally the "Country of Red Faces." To give one a quick impressionistic view of a Tibetan, I should say he was an American Indian dressed in Chinese clothes! I think, too, that I could not improve upon that description if I should study on it for months.

He has a fine, big physique. His skin is a light brown and he invariably has red cheeks. He wears a queue but his face is smooth. If hairs grow, they are plucked out with tweezers. He is dressed in a long satin or silk robe, exactly after the pattern of the northern Chinese and the Manchu. He has a sash about his waist and a Chinese cap on his head, of black satin with the red button in the center. If it is winter, he has a cap with ear-laps cozily lined with fur. His shoes are moccasins. Of course, if he is mingling with Occidentals, he will wear a modern felt hat, for I have noticed in all Oriental countries that any innovation in dress begins at the two extremities. It is so in Japan, in China, in the Philippines, and even in Tibet!

His *pièce de résistance* is his earring. This differentiates him from the undecorated Chinese gentleman, and puts him, I believe, in a class by himself—for he wears only one. But that is a work of art. It consists of huge pieces of turquoise matrix framed in Oriental gold (which means that there is no alloy in it). These pieces are held together by delicate and invisible gold rings so that the earring hangs from the nawab's ear to

his shoulder. It is fetching, and most curious of all, he knows it.

There are three million people in Tibet ruled over by the head of the church, who is as well the head of the state. This one person is the Dalai Lama, whose power is absolute.

In Lhasa, the capital, opium is so much sought after that it sells there for its weight in silver. All of Tibet's silk, her porcelain, her rugs, and her tea come from China. Indeed, Chinese brick-tea passes as currency in this independent country.

One Sunday in Darjeeling, I went down to see the mountain people at their best. Not that they had put on their "best" to go to church; they had donned it to go to market. It is the day that they rest from labor, so they have a market-day which is a gala day for remembrance. Up every path through tea plantations, down from higher points than the Place of the Thunderbolt, they came. They came dressed in colors that were indescribably beautiful and were blended in such a tone scheme as Worth himself might envy. The women astonished me by their constant use of velvet. It is warm, and better still, the colors are more radiant and richer in velvet than in wool, and it satisfies them. Every woman had on a velvet bodice, and many of their full skirts were velvet, but most of them were made of some cotton material that blended in color with the bodice. Sometimes it was a brilliant green bodice, a henna skirt, and an orange shawl, that made the cos-





A WOMAN OF THE HILLS DRESSED IN VELVET



tume perfect. Or perhaps it was a brilliant blue velvet bodice and a rose-colored shawl and skirt. There were reds and rose, greens of all shades, blue of every description—and jewelry—earrings, nose rings, dog collars and shawls to blend in with the picture. Red cheeks and healthy laughter completed the scene. Tibetans, Nepalese, Sikhimese, Lepchas, and hill people were all represented, and, for the most part, they have taken so much from each other that it is difficult to separate them into clearly defined groups.

Before coming up to Darjeeling to make the trip to the "Top of the World" my wish to talk with one of the influential Tibetans was satisfied.

The Generalissimo of all the armies of the Dalai Lama had come down to Calcutta. An Indian Sadhu who was a warm friend of the Saheb's knew this important Tibetan well. To explain the Indian Sadhu: Down through the centuries in India religion has been taught by wandering priests who give up their lives somewhat as Saint Francis did, making poverty a passion and religion a thing to be desired—and their greatest attraction. Since and before the days of Sundar Singh there have been numbers of Indian Christians who have adopted the Indian method and have become Christian Sadhus. Our home in Calcutta often shelters them. Often they sit at our table with us. Some of them have their mail sent in our care, for, though "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests," these Sadhus have no place to lay their heads. But our

Christian Sadhu had been up in the mountain fastnesses of Tibet. He had made the Jesus Way of Life so attractive that he had become a warm friend of this, the Dalai Lama's prime minister.

"You must meet him," he said, and I forthwith penned in my best Oriental phrases (though in English) an invitation to his Excellency to lunch with us. Knowing that the Oriental who has not donned Occidental clothes fears an Occidental dinner party more than he does a bayonet, I refrained from inviting his Highness to dine with us. But, to my amazement, he feared my luncheon party fully as much. He confided in the Sadhu, and the Sadhu, Oriental-like, confided it to me. He was not accustomed to the knife and prong, he said, and our tasteless, uncooked Western food did not agree with him. But I would not be refused. I knew that importunity has always been successful in the Orient. I asked him to come and sip Chinese tea with the Saheb and me. And, to my great joy, he accepted.

I got out my best Chinese tea cups, with silver saucers. I brought out my red silk-lacquer tea poys—and I planned the very high seat in which I should insist upon his sitting—where he would look at Chinese and Tibetan pictures, vases, embroidery and brasses. I furthermore inveigled some "Dragon Well" and Jasmine tea from a Chinese merchant in the Chinatown of Calcutta, and, with simple Oriental sweets, I felt ready to receive his Excellency the prime minister of Tibet.

Knowing that our servants had never seen a Tibetan of the official class, I went into meticulous detail in preparation for the ceremony. Fifteen minutes before the hour we expected him, a high-powered American motor came swinging at full speed around the driveway, and in a few moments I went to my drawing room to find his Excellency already within standing to await my coming, and with him was a smiling Tibetan girl. He was speaking in Tibetan and very graciously the young lady—who was no less than Princess Mary—began to interpret what he said in quaint but discriminating English.

“Will your Excellency be seated?” said I, in my best Oriental manner, gesturing him Chinese fashion to the seat of vantage which I had planned. I did want him to like us, and I did want him to feel at home.

What an Oriental picture he made! He wore a rich, deep, yellow gown of glowing satin of large Chinese design. His queue was well kept and long. His features were purely American Indian. His high, warm Tibetan boots must have been most uncomfortable in this warm Calcutta climate, even though it was the best weather we could display, for it was our so-called winter. On his head he wore a soft, plainly new felt hat, which, again Oriental-like, he kept on. But why should one change his etiquette merely because he has changed his hat? For all Oriental headgears, from the Chinese cap, the Indian turban to the Turkish fez, are kept on indoors. It is only the European who de-

mands the constant change of air on the head of the male of the species by insisting that he remove his hat, here, there, and everywhere.

After a few sweet nothings were said by the Saheb, tea was served.

Jasmine tea was served in Chinese cups on lacquered tables. His eyes shone. He settled back. He was at home, and I was relieved. He began to feel natural enough to get up, stalk about the room, feel of everything and quite politely admired some of our Chinese and Burmese bric-a-brac. One thing from Tibet arrested his attention. It was a rare brass picture of the fourteen postures of Buddha. The front was carved brass set here and there with turquoise. The frame was wood and deep and painted black, red, and gilt, which soften the whole. As the picture was not hanging, he turned it about with the Saheb's help, and looked at its heavy copper back—and then—he noticed the Tibetan writing. The Saheb had brought this picture from one of the great lamaseries of Sikkim when he had made a part of the trail with the Mount Everest climbers and Lord Ronaldshay. He fondly and delicately rubbed the Tibetan words, carved in copper, tracing them with his long nails while he mumbled the words. This proved our password for his friendship. Friendship, however, we were soon to learn, ended with individual Tibetans and had no connection with the government, which is in reality vested in one man, the person of the Dalai Lama.

The prime minister went back to his chair and his



tea. He took up the cup with the saucer as a handle, proper Chinese fashion, brushed back the jasmine flowers and tea leaves with the cover, and then loudly drew in his breath, to cool off the tea—and to express his pleasure.

While he and the Saheb had been examining the treasure, I had been talking with the lovely Princess Mary, for she had been three years in our Queen's Hill school in Darjeeling, and carried on an easy conversation in English. This school for girls is nestled on one of those high mountainsides at Mount Hermon. Just across the chasm of rich valleys stretch the eternal snows, and here two hundred girls—the daughters of missionaries, of merchants, American, English and European, and an occasional princess, like Mary—live and get such a preparation for life as only devoted teachers and an inspiring, healthful location can give them. I was greatly drawn to this young princess—the first Tibetan woman with whom I had ever had an intelligent conversation. When his Excellency was happily tea drinking, I ventured, "Your Excellency, the English which the princess speaks is admirable and fluent as well." This embarrassed her to interpret. I tried a little Peking Mandarin, which, to my surprised delight, he understood. He had visited the Chinese capital with the Dalai Lama in 1908, he said. But he had forgotten most of the Chinese language he had learned, and so conversation was impossible save for the interpretation of Princess Mary. He smiled and

said, "Of course, I do not know how well she is speaking or whether she is saying what I say to you, also what you say to me. But, at any rate, she is our only medium," and so the conversation went on.

Having become interested in the lovely girl, who was such a contrast to all I knew of Tibetan priestcraft, I boldly asked, "And, now, your Excellency, since Princess Mary has done so well in her three years at Queen's Hill, where is it your intention to send her next? Shall it be England, whose people rule India, or shall it be to America, the land from which her devoted teachers came?" At this, his body stiffened into the generalissimo of all the Dalai Lama's forces. His shoulders went back, his chest up, his feet both firmly planted on the floor, a fierce, stern look of anger flashed from his eyes.

"Nowhere shall I send her. I shall take her back to the land of the Bhotias. She has been gone too long now. In three years one is weaned from one's country. She returns with me."

I had said the wrong thing. That was evident, but I was seriously anxious to know, and I found out. But the Saheb now came to the rescue and discreetly directed the conversation to more amicable themes. I was silent, almost forgetful of the company. For I was picturing the return of lovely, charming, well-informed Princess Mary, who had mingled for three happy years with the singing, athletic, free girls of Europe and America, being taken back into the locked



PRAYING WITH BOTH HANDS

In his right the Prayer Wheel, which he constantly turns, and in his left  
the Rosary



castles of Lhasa. She was helpless, but, like all cultured Orientals, she expressed no feeling in her face. My heart was broken. I liked Tibet less, and yet felt more drawn to it than ever.

We talked of the Mount Everest expedition, of the telegraph wires which his Excellency was planning to have reach Lhasa. Little did we know then, as we have learned since, that our friend the generalissimo would be threatened with execution if this plan for the telegraph wires were completed.

"We have read, your Excellency, much about your lofty country but we should some day like to come and know you, your country and your fellow countrymen better!" ventured the Saheb, as I thought, quite diplomatically.

"My country is closed, sir," answered the Tibetan, laconically.

"Will it always be closed?" asked the Saheb with a smile.

"Always, even to the Mount Everest climbers."

"We have found you so frank, your Excellency," said the Saheb—the ice was getting very thin—"will you not tell us why you have closed your country so tight to us?"

"I shall tell you, sir, if you are sincere in your desire to know"—and in blunt fashion he told us the story.

"Sometimes we have thought of letting you missionaries of Jesus come. For your message is one of love and friendship, and our people like you. But if

we let you missionaries come, you teach our people to desire many things which they do not have, which our country does not have. They see the missionaries using many things which they would like, things which, I admit, are both attractive and useful. By that time the traders—your Western traders—have learned of their desires and come along with all these things our people have been taught to want. Trade grows. By and by the traders get into trouble, and need protection. They send to their government, then the soldiers come, and our people are killed. There is war. And by and by we look at the flagpole. It is not our flag, but your flag. Our flag is hauled down and trampled upon and a European flag is in its place. And our country is no more. No, Saheb, we shall not let your people in even with the message of love. It is dangerous." Of course the Saheb and I took pardonable pride in the fact that we were able to truthfully assure him that our own American government had never spread its power through selfish conquest. He knew that this was true.

Yet from these Tibetan lips we had heard the entire Orient speak its mind concerning European expansion. And when we secured our permits to go to the "Top of the World" and were obliged to sign our names to a document promising that even though we reached the borders of Tibet we would not step foot on her soil, we understood.



## CHAPTER III

### THE LURE OF THE ETERNAL SNOWS

THE train for Darjeeling leaves the Sealdah station at Calcutta at nine-fifty o'clock in the evening. It is made up and ready for passengers hours before the time for departure, and is soon filled. The first-class carriages are few and few people are in them. The second-class are more numerous and have more people in them, while the third-class are most numerous and are jammed. After every seat is taken, and every available standing space filled, an equal number crowd in, and those who have the strength to hang on, stay in. It looks as though they were sitting on each other's laps, and surely they are standing on each other's feet. As they push themselves in with baskets, brass bowls, bird cages, bedding rolls, and *ic-mics* (a device of four or five white enamel vegetable dishes set one into the other, with a small charcoal brazier underneath to keep all the vegetables hot), I wonder why it is that in every method of transportation around the world, the poor, who perhaps pay the least per capita, but from whom the companies make the most profit, must suffer such physical hardships. Here in this crowded manner they must exist all night and try to sleep. No fans for them, and no space. Heaven grant them sleep and forgetfulness!

With the help of fans in the first- and second-class carriages one is able to get some rest until the guard rudely awakens one at four in the morning calling out "*Patia-war*." This is the station where we change to a smaller-gauged railway, and means we must pack our belongings and change cars. After we are awake enough to see, we find our train on the opposite side of the covered shed. Another scramble ensues for a compartment on the new train, in which we find again that the race is to the swift. The train waits leisurely here one hour, which gives all the cosmopolitan passengers who are traveling out of the heat toward the snows ample time to get their varying kinds of food. For the European, there is a little mat shed, which is well lighted with electricity, and in which one sees Indian bearers ("boys," as they are called in China, and in America "waiters") dressed in their spotless white turbans and equally white "clerical" coat, as long as a Prince Albert and buttoned right up to the collar. We enter and find that "chota hazri" is being served. "Chota hazri," literally translated, means "*petite déjeuner*," or little breakfast. Whether the excellent idea originated in France or whether the versatile French took the happy custom from old India, I do not know, but knowing the age of many of these excellent customs in India, I should be inclined to give priority to the land of Hindustan.

But the "chota hazri" of India is not "*café au lait*" and two crisp buns; it is tea with toast, always dry.

Sometimes butter is found on the plate. Even coffee lovers grow to prefer tea for "chota hazri" in India. It seems to belong to the country as a pith helmet does, for men's heads, instead of the universal straw hat at home.

### TRAIN FOR SILIGURI

Darjeeling is three hundred and seven miles by rail north of the city of Calcutta. We had come about two hundred miles during the night as far as Patiawar. The sign on the train across the tracks read "Train for Siliguri." This change of trains is necessary because the gauge of the second section is a little narrower than the one we traveled on to this point. I was fretting a bit at so many changes, and especially so early in the morning, when I heard an old gentleman tell of the hardships of this journey in the days gone by. In those "good old days" there was a train only to Sahebganj (meaning the burial place of the foreign martyrs). That was at a point some distance back. There was a river there, across which they must ferry, which consumed never less than four hours, and often six were spent before they reached the point at which they were obliged to get out of the ferry, and all wade a mile through the sand with the blazing sun of Bengal beating down on their heads. After that, he told us, they were put into an oxcart, or "bile-garry," in which they jolted along for miles, through the towns of Kissenganj and Titaloya, until they happily reached Siliguri. He

said they often rested here, not from choice but from necessity, for after the oxcart ride the most robust felt that every bone in his body had been dislocated. From this point they were able to get a horse carriage, or *tonga*, which is a very high carriage, and all the forty-eight miles from Siliguri to Darjeeling they traveled in this fashion. After this outburst we silently endured the comforts of 1925.

On this splendid little train we reached Siliguri about ten o'clock in the morning. We had done in five hours what it took twenty-four hours and sometimes more to accomplish a few decades ago. At Siliguri we changed again, this time to a Liliputian train that stood on a tiny railroad with a gauge of two feet. The wheels seemed to me about as big as the wheels of a child's express cart, and the carriages set up so high over them that it seemed a gust of wind from the mountains above would blow them over the precipice at almost any turn. Another scramble for seats ensues, but this time you must part with your luggage and go to the farther end of the platform and see it all weighed. For here the train divides. The train, which one engine has pulled so far, is now broken up into perhaps four or even five trains, each with its own locomotive, because at Siliguri the climb begins. We have so far crawled along the beautiful plains of Bengal, where the scenery has been the luxurious scenery of the tropics, where God seems to be almost spendthrift, where, with the most lavish hand in the world, he makes gardens beyond de-



THE LINDSEY TRAIL THAT CARRIES US ROUND MOUNTAIN CLIFFS BY HIGHEST CLIFFS AND LINDSEY  
US SEVEN THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THE PLAIN



scription. Whether it is the gardens of Bengal, of southern India, of Burma, Malaya, of the Hawaiians, the Philippines, wherever the tropical rains and sunshine meet, and where the indefatigable laborer of the tropics sets his plow, there is a garden which no picture or camera or words can adequately paint. We passed paddy fields—the greenest of all growing things in the world; we passed groves of palm trees, clustering affectionately around a thatched-roofed mud village; we passed solitary palms too, and early that morning we watched a young Indian lad climb the smooth, lofty, delicate palmyra to get the earthen jar which he had hung there the day before, and as he came sliding swiftly down we saw that he carried the jar as though it must be full. This is the sap from which the Indians make their *tari*, or toddy, as we usually call it. For miles we passed fields of magnificent distances and no fences. The Indian farmer does not live among his fields as does the farmer of the Western world, but prefers rather to live more gregariously in the village, even though he and his family, like those of his fellow villagers, walk five and sometimes ten miles a day to get to their fields and return again at sunset to their village home. When one realizes that there are seven hundred thousand such villages in India, and when one considers that there are only twenty-five cities in the entire continent of India with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants, one can feel the importance of this village life. I have never heard of a farmer's wife in



India who had lost her mind through loneliness, as has often happened in the West—no, the Orient has learned the value of community life, even though it means more labor, and his fields are far distant. He does not feel tempted to leave his home after he arrives from his daily toil, to find the life which his social nature craves, but, after arriving, he finds his home in the very center of village life. Here is the temple, where worship is elaborate and interesting, even garish; from this center on every possible occasion of feast day and holiday and holy day, there are parades in which the villagers take part. After the evening meal, the story-teller sits and spins out in spell-binding fashion stories of ancient India, and mystic stories of the many gods which the children fear and which grow into life-long superstitions. The village orchestra accompanies the story-teller, who is often a peripatetic religious evangelist who sings the Vedic hymns until all the village has learned them.

But we had passed the plains and the farmers, and found ourselves in a totally different India. This amusing switchback railway challenges my admiration. It fascinates me. It is one of the most remarkable feats in engineering skill in the world, and to take this ride was an experience I shall remember for a lifetime. The tiny locomotives carry trains of fully thirty-five tons up gradients of one in twenty. A little mountain boy stands on the front of the engine and scatters sand almost constantly on the rails. The road winds and



A YOUNG LADY FROM NEPAL



winds on the sheer cliffs of these mighty mountain masses, always going higher and higher. We see our own engine almost continuously as it takes the curves like a jointed toy train of cars. Before we had gone halfway we had become a confiding family. The engineer tells us of his wonderful little engine. The mountain boys give us generously of their smiles. All the while we are adding one warm coat after another until we are too loaded down to walk. We put on gloves. We take out steamer rugs that have been packed away in moth balls and wrap ourselves up in them. This friendly little train accommodates its passengers. It waits at Kurseong until we have eaten a *table d'hôte* lunch. It is the usual tasteless soup, fish, chop, curry and rice, pudding and tea, guaranteed to be served in nineteen minutes. But wisely there is never a guarantee that it will be digested! We wind around horseshoe curves, we switch back through clusters of little mountain huts, but whether looking forward or backward, there is always the view—unsurpassed, indescribable, majestic. At Siliguri, when we began our thrilling ascent to the top, we bade farewell to rice fields. In this section of the mountains were the famous tea gardens—the largest in the world. It seems as though all the mountainsides had been touched by the skillful magic fingers of Indians, and tea gardens had sprung into being. These tea gardens, which cover whole mountainsides, look almost too artificial to be natural. They are planted in perfect rows. Every

leaf shines in waxen beauty as though it had been polished for parade. Not a weed has been allowed to live under or between or around about a solitary bush. The picking has been done by such skilled fingers that every bush is the same size. We look down, far below us to the plains, and there stretches a relief map of eastern Bengal that is alluring.

We pass on and up through a sal forest—a forest of sal trees. These trees grow very tall and have very few branches and short ones. The leaves seem unwilling to be far enough away from the mother trunk to live out on a lonely swinging limb, so they cling close to the trunk and secure to us an open view through their barren forest. The sal trees are sacred to the Santali, an aboriginal group who live in eastern Bengal. The sal groves are the sacred groves of this part of the country.

### A MOUNTAIN JUNGLE

After passing the sal forests we come through the mountain jungle. It is so dense we feel the clouds hanging heavy over us. The trees are stately. There are giant pines, noble cryptomeria; there are stalwart fern trees of lacy beauty. There are tender vines too. There are mountain bamboo, whose bark is chiseled in sections by nature's best sculptor. There are huge parasites whose botanical names are unspellable, running at large around giant trunks, skipping across when no one is on guard, to another tree, playing hide and seek with other daring vines and parasites until there has grown



A STUPA, UNDER WHICH A SACRED RELIC OF THE PERSON OF  
BUDDHA IS SUPPOSED TO BE BURIED





up one wild symphonic jungle of tangled beauty. If the hunters who were on the train were to be trusted (and the books verify their tales), through this tangle roamed tigers, bear, deer, and wild boar. In the midst of all this green loveliness here and there a cardinal flower would show its gorgeous head and in stately pride withstand the admiration of the green world by which it found itself surrounded.

A few hours of jungle wildwood brought us up to the primeval forests of the highest range in the world. We found our necks aching as we searched for the tops of the noble oaks—the delicate acacias, the rich, full fig trees, the amusing banyans, the valuable rubber trees, and again the giant bamboos which were sixty feet high, and yet whose lacy tips swayed unbroken in the driving mountain gales.

We found ourselves at seven thousand four hundred and seven feet at the town of Ghoom. It is a common saying and the almost universally spontaneous saying of newcomers that this town was misnamed. It should have been called Gloom. For even though we have been in and out of Ghoom many times on train, on pony back, and on foot, I have never seen Ghoom save in a dense cloud.

It is a mountain town. The tiny shops line the narrow lanes that run up and down the mountainsides.

The mountain people sit cross-legged, hugging a charcoal brazier to keep warm, and sell their wares with smiles. Their English is not half so effective as

their smiles. Leaving Ghoom we caught our first glimpse of Darjeeling, the Place of the Thunderbolt. There it lay at the beautiful sunset hour, a city of golden windows as the glow of the cold setting sun shone on the glass of the European houses that are built on the mountainside, until it became a dream city. The houses are built mostly on one side in order that all may have a view of the majestic snows, which rise up mile upon mile into the very heavens.

Darjeeling as a city is worthy of study. In the summer about thirty thousand people are numbered as dwellers there, though the Europeans comprise only one tenth of the population.

Of Hindus there are thirteen thousand. Here I find myself instinctively putting down the population of this "Place of the Thunderbolt," according to religion—but that is India. In this religious country we first learn a man's religion, after that, his nationality.

Of these thirteen thousand Hindus, many are influential Indians who hold government posts and who bring their families to the mountains during the intolerable heat of the plains.

Of Buddhists there are almost six thousand. The world thinks that India has few Buddhists, and rightly. But we are now in the mountains, where the influence of Tibet is far stronger than the influence of India. And Tibet is Buddhist.

Followers of the Prophet Mohammed number about one thousand and Christians over two thousand.



A BURDEN AND A SMILE



Tibetans are everywhere. They are shopkeepers. They are guides. They are horsemen. They are vendors displaying all kinds of Tibetan treasures from jewelry to their sacred prayer wheels. But even these go for a price. For the Tibetan seems to have the Chinese characteristic of driving an excellent bargain, and is not too particular what he sells.

Peoples pure and peoples of mixed blood fill Darjeeling. The pure Bhutias, or Tibetans, are less numerous than pure Nepalese. But the town is made up of the Lepchas, the Akas, the Mechis, and a few aboriginal tribes that are probably more or less combinations of Tibetan and Nepalese.

Once at Darjeeling we were at home. For yonder, two miles from the little station, just around the next large bend, were the trees of Mount Hermon. Oh, little lovely Mount Hermon in Massachusetts, you who have nurtured so many high ideals of youth and sent them out to God's great world to serve, how proud you would be of your big namesake of seventy acres in the Land of the Thunderbolt! Here, too, shall be nurtured high ideals of youth—but here too shall be saved and held the lives of God's workmen. It was the Saheb who first had the courage to buy this haven on the mountaintop, and here and there we have built a tiny nest for the missionaries and their families to escape the parching heat of the plains. The Saheb saw their faces grow paler with each successive fever season, and so with faith he journeyed to the land. He saw that it

was good. He sojourned there, he and his fellow workers with him, and as men and women of God who believe in his work and his workers in the world help him, we shall build more nests and a school, like yours, old Mount Hermon, for the ideals of youth to expand in.

By the time we reached the last bend toward Mount Hermon, we looked back to see Darjeeling. The sun had long since disappeared behind the snows. All light had faded from the sky. But the sparkling, artificial lights of the city dazzled us. The stars in the cold, clear sky sobered us. Another dream city. We made the last turn and, walking down on the quiet road through the deeper shade of the great cryptomerias, we wound slowly down to our beloved Eyrie. It's only a one-room shack, but it's set just where an eagle's nest should be—near to heaven. Every look upward is toward the eternal snows. They are so white, so mighty, so vast, so eternal. There is one glory of the moon, and another of the stars—and still another glory of the eternal snows. The Saheb had made his fire on the hearth to keep out the gale which blows through the cracks and while the Eyrie grew warmer with the crackling fire, we walked out to take one look at the crescent moon rising white and chaste above these mighty white glaciers of the ages. We worshiped. We prayed. We felt our true small stature, but our souls expanded, and we took one last look at the snows before the morning. We were not eagles in many senses but we planned that first

night under the starry sky to climb some of those lofty heights with Darjeeling as our base. It was from Darjeeling that the brave Mount Everest climbers had started, and here we decided to live in our tiny hot-weather Eyrie while we planned the trip to the "Top of the World."

Yonder down through the valleys, on the hot, humid plains of India, fever had ten thousand in her grip. Here were arctic snows rising up nearest to the vault of heaven from the hottest country in the world.

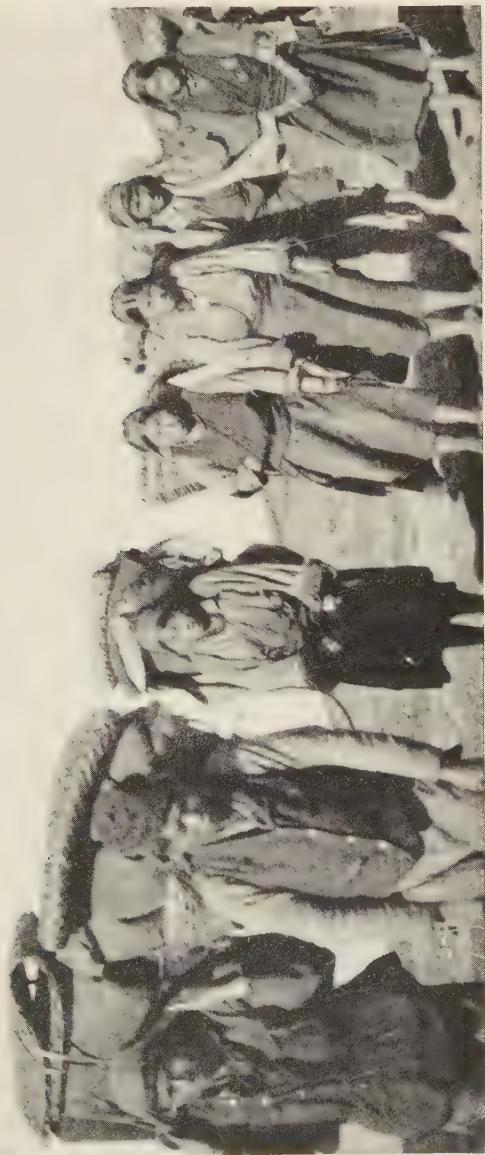


## CHAPTER IV

### THE RETINUE LEAVES THE EYRIE

THE Eyrie was teeming with life. Inside and out. I was learning that there are as many days of preparation needed for ten days on the "Top of the World" as are used in the trip itself. We found our one room almost too small for all essentials. So the Saheb, with the help of a skillful Indian, made a breakfast canopy. Four poles with cross bamboo sticks holding them taut at the top made an excellent frame for the piece of oiled cotton which served as a protection against rain as well as against the rays of the sun—for the rays are strangely to be feared even in this mountain coolness. We kept the canopy so high, however, that none of the great view would be cut off. Even baked apples and American coffee were not so alluring as this mighty Everest range. Half the horizon was white with age-old glaciers. Just to our left we looked into the beautiful Teesta valley, and with glasses we could see the Teesta River itself wending its rocky way through Bengal, and all the valleys as far as eye can see are covered with the waxen tea bushes.

The trees close at hand were of many varieties, but as fascinating as a tree is to me, the flowers near the Eyrie were more fascinating. Orchids were bursting



OUR RETINUE LEAVES THE EYRIE



forth from different parts of the trunks—yellow orchids, white orchids, mauve orchids, purple orchids, orchids large and orchids small, hanging from these blessed trees, blossoming in all their delicacy and chastity. My *mali* has discovered my love for them, and each morning I find in the center of my breakfast table under our open canopy a bowl of orchids that trail to the four corners of that tiny table. Why attempt to live in one room or any room at all when all this glory awaits us just outside?

The first step in planning the trip was to find Naspati. He is pronounced Nuspatee (Nus-pa-tee), with the accent on the a. The Saheb had sung the praises of this Tibetan guide until I feared to meet such a paragon of virtues. Where was Naspati? There is, of course, no street and number to which you may address these Tibetan friends. We walked into Darjeeling and asked several Tibetans near his old haunts if he were living, and if so where he was to be found. Other guides, also Tibetan, who cared more to get business than for their friendship to Naspati, assured us that he was not here this season. But we accepted no answer, negative or indifferent, and knew that if he were in the hills and if we were persistent enough in our askings, Naspati would appear, for the Orient has a "grapevine telegraph" that is as sure as any little yellow Western Union envelope. No wonder the Orient has not produced telegraph or telephone or radio. It does not need them. It has an underground system that can

spread news as fast as the ether itself. And so one morning while we were breakfasting under the canopy and feasting our souls on the eternal snows, the exquisite orchids, and the bird symphony, Naspati arrived. Our trip was assured. Such bowing as he and the Saheb went through and such ceremony! We should have the trip, and a proper Oriental one, if Naspati's greeting and the Saheb's glowing response were any thermometer.

Naspati dressed in his long silk gown and sash was a typical Tibetan. His face was placid as a Buddhist's face often is. His cheeks were red. But in his belt he carried a knife in a beautifully embossed silver case. This did not harmonize with a pacific Buddhist, but I have long since ceased to inquire about the inconsistencies of people and their religion. I look at them and ponder about it later.

There must be certificates of permission to travel in those parts, Naspati told us, and forthwith letters had to be written to the government officials for permission to travel in Nepal and Sikkim and British Sikkim, and it was in signing these certificates of permission that we had to promise not to step foot over into Tibet.

Naspati looked over our luggage. He consulted the cook as to what we liked to eat and how much, and declared that to carry his luggage, the cook's luggage, and ours we should need ten coolies. The retinue was growing. It now consisted of Naspati, the Bawarchi (the



NASPAI, OUR GUIDE, PHILOSOPHER, AND FRIEND





cook), three horses, two syce (little boys to look after the horses) and ourselves.

"No, that will not be enough. You will have to have a sweeper," laughed Naspati as we sighed over the increasing host. "But all your bread, your food, your milk, your horses' food, and a few live chickens must be carried," he went on in detail to defend himself.

We meekly agreed, for Naspati knew. The entire retinue looked to him as the sirdar (literally "governor"), and we realized that if all were to go well, he must become our sirdar as well.

"I know these mountains, Saheb, I know the road. You may trust me."

And we did.

Days before the date set for departure rain fell in torrents. Naspati came daily to the Eyrie. We bought rain coats and rain hats, fearing the worst. And when the morning of the great day came we awoke to find it still raining and the snows enveloped in dense cloud. Torrents. We packed our suit cases in faith. We rolled our bedding in greater faith. The Eyrie had been perfectly dry but to think of sitting the entire day on horseback in such a downpour seemed impossible. Naspati came only two hours late. The horses appeared soon after. The syce came. Finally two or three coolies wandered in. Then more until the Eyrie was surrounded by a drenched and too-willing host.

"But how about the weather, Naspati? We can't start out in this!"

"Oh," he said, accompanied by Oriental gestures and peering into the cloud-burst outside, "the weather is going to be excellent. To-morrow will be clear. We must make the first lap of our journey to-day. The view on the top we must think of, and that is days hence."

So we yielded to his more experienced judgment. If you have never measured the amount of food that two people consume in ten days, you should take a trip when it must all be carried. One feels positively gross.

"We cannot eat all that," I insisted to the sirdar as I looked at the tins and tins of meat, of vegetables, of sardines, of cheese, of soup—of everything, in fact—and a huge bag full of loaves of bread! And then the live chickens tied together so cruelly! But Naspati began determinedly to pile the goods on the coolies' backs. And the coolies were women! But what pictures of women! They looked as dressed up as girls ready for a party. Their smooth black hair was parted meticulously and brushed to a glow. About their necks were mammoth turquoise ornaments, silver dog collars (the style has at last arrived in New York! I shall report it to Tibet when I get back), and red beads. Oh, many strings of red beads! Their cheeks were rouged but it was nature's variety, and their lips salved with pure, red, healthy blood flowing through their veins. Bracelets in plenty and anklets on bare feet and their lovely costumes made them a joy forever.

First went the Bawarchi, or cook. He had been



OUR BAWARCHI—A WEATHERED MOUNTAINEER



with one section of the Mount Everest climbers, so knew the roads he was to take as well as the white man's philosophy, which was equally important. Then the ten coolies, then Naspati on a white horse, the Saheb on the black, and I on the brown. The two little syce walked just behind us, and last of all came Buddu ("Blessing"). He *was* a blessing—but he was funny to look at. Buddu was our sweeper boy. He had never roamed the mountains as had these hardened coolies. They were mountain people, knew their mountains and loved them. But Buddu was from the plains. He was thin and delicate. His warmest and almost his only garment was the Saheb's discarded morning coat, which came clear to his heels! The sleeves were turned back and back again to be comfortable, and as for the rest—well, it was doubled over enough to keep him warm.

That was our retinue, and we looked back on our little Eyrie knowing we had left one dry spot and looked forward into torrents of rain, not knowing what great experiences were ahead of us. We were dressed in rain coats, and I was persuaded to carry an eighty-cent umbrella.

We passed through the lovely cryptomeria of our Mount Hermon, then on to Birch Hill Road until we reached the Cart Road and passed through the bazaar.

"Where are those white foreigners going on a day like this?" they asked from the bazaar.

"Up to see the snows!" chuckled our retinue in the

hill language. They did not wait to answer the laughter. It was evident they did not wish to discuss it.

The first five miles of the journey brought us to Ghoom. It was tiresome carrying an umbrella constantly. The ponies could not travel fast for fear of slipping. We passed few people. I shall never forget the mountain coolie girl we passed that day so exhausted from carrying her heavy burden on her back she sat down on the stone wall to rest and had fallen asleep. But so faithful she was in carrying her burden that before she slept she had placed her umbrella so that her burden was protected as well as herself.

We stopped at a small hotel in the lonely town of Ghoom called "The Pines" for a cup of hot tea. A few city dwellers from Calcutta were trying to amuse themselves indoors on this rainy day. The old tin piano was doing its duty while a man banged out "The Stars and Stripes Forever."

We dared not stay long enough to get dry, so hurried on still in this downpour. People looked at us as though they thought we had lost our minds, and for a few hours I almost thought we had. But the birds did not mind it in the least; they sang to us and comforted us and told us in their daily operetta that it would turn out all right. The mocking birds gave us a vaudeville, and toward the hour of the setting sun, when the rain seemed to have exhausted itself, two large eagles sailed ahead of us and challenged us to sail with them to the "Top of the World."



BUDDU—OUR BLESSING

An outcaste sweeper boy whose smile and whose dreams lifted him above his menial tasks as the mountains are lifted above the plains





As we climbed up and up the steep paths of the mountains we realized that at each step we were leaving farther behind the people of our kind. We had hitched our wagon to a star and we should follow it.

We passed tiny villages which hugged the mountain paths—bazaars we call them. From each hospitable open shop the people called out to our retinue, so that before we had arrived on our horses, every man, woman and child in the village had enjoyed a wise chuckle over the doings of this Saheb and Memsahab who were on their way to the “Top of the World.”

“And for pleasure—to *play* they go!” sighed these wise old heads of the hill tribes. “The Saheb and Memsahab go to see the snows in the rain—queer people, the Sahebs—they work hard to play—queer people!” repeated the old fatherly patriarch as he walked back to his brazier of hot charcoals and rubbed his hands together over it in superior wisdom.

I put down my umbrella and saw over the hills a sunset of glory. We had traveled thirteen miles in the rain, feeling the mountain wind against our faces. It had been invigorating as well as drenching—and we were glad to see a cottage where we were to rest.

Jorepokri—literally “Two Ponds”—marked the end of the first day’s march. Altitude seven thousand four hundred feet, said Naspati. Before we were willing to go inside the cottage and enjoy a fire, we looked long at the golden sunset reflecting its colors in the “two ponds” as a promise of a brighter day to-morrow.

## CHAPTER V

### SOMETHING NEW IN HOTELS

**T**URNING from the sunset, I met for the first time a Dak Bungalow. Later it became an intimate acquaintance of mine. And now I cannot live in India and plan heavy travel without it. The Dak Bungalow at Jorepokri, "Two Ponds," was a plaster hut, painted white. It had a tile roof, and it had evidently been placed beside the two ponds first because of its nearness to water, and second because this was a spot in a ravine which was protected from the sweeping mountain gales.

The little house was roomy enough. There was a living room fifteen by eighteen feet into which the front door opened. This had one window and a fireplace. Blessed fireplace! It must have been of Tibetan style, for I have never seen any like these Himalayan fireplaces before or since. Instead of being long and shallow to send the heat out into the room, as ours are, it had a very narrow opening and was extremely deep, so deep, in fact, that instead of laying in the logs lengthwise, they were stuck in on end, and being three feet long a good part of them protruded into the room. Most of the heat and only a part of the smoke went into the chimney. But the crackling hemlocks sounded warm and comforted us.



ARRIVING AFTER THE DAY'S MARCH, WE TAKE FULL POSSESSION OF THE DAK BUNGALOW, THE HIMALAYAN HOTEL.



Fortunately, days ahead the *chokidar* knew of our coming. Naspati had notified him. I discovered that fact to be the reason why he insisted upon our starting in the pouring rain. He had given all the *chokidars* on the high ranges the exact date that we were to be expected. The *chokidar* is the caretaker or gatekeeper in a larger establishment. But in these Himalayan Dak Bungalows he is an all-round guide, philosopher, and friend.

The Dak Bungalow is an ancient Indian institution. *Dak* literally means "public," though often people have misinterpreted it as meaning "mail." For all through the jungle districts the "Dak Runner" of whom Kipling sings is the "Mail Runner." He carries a stick over his shoulders with sleigh bells jingling at every step, and he never walks, but runs mile on mile until he meets the one who is to relay him, when he hands over the mail, stick, bells, and all. There are many tragic stories to be told of the "Dak Runner" and the white man waiting in the jungle for his letters from home.

The Dak Bungalow idea was in existence as far back as the ninth century, when the first great Moguls came triumphantly down the path made centuries before by Alexander the Great through Afghanistan. The idea was not then expressed in a stone and plaster bungalow with a fireplace and a tile roof. Out in the jungle I saw what was perhaps the type of the original Dak Bungalow.

## AN INDIAN IDEA

Maharajahs and their innumerable trains have always traveled. They could not go on rivers, as the royalty of China and Egypt did, and live on gorgeously appointed houseboats. But in India provision had to be made on dry land, and often very dry land. The Bastar jungle is still primitive, and when there I saw a camp deserted by the Maharani only a few days before. A large space of acres had been cleared of jungle. The branches of green trees had been kept, and after the framework had been built the walls were woven of the evergreen branches. There were kitchens and storerooms. There was a place for the limousine (a seven-passenger Buick) as well as a stable for the elephant, for the Maharani uses both. There were court-rooms, and a dining room in which her Majesty always dines alone. This camp-court idea has grown through the centuries, has varied with the climate in different parts of India, and since the British Raj has held sway, it has been developed until it is a clean and comfortable abiding place from the top of the Himalayas to the hot, humid plains of southern India.

It developed from the jungle variety of tree screen. Then tents were used. Later came wattle and mud huts, and finally the British carried them to perfection on the plains in brick and mortar, and in our mountains of stone and plaster. The old kings and officials would take their courts with them in these Dak Bungalows.



A Methodist bishop, too, has held communion service on the verandas of Dak Bungalows, has baptized Indian children within their walls, and has established missions in their courtyards. A Dak Bungalow is a useful institution.

We blessed them on that rainy night in Jorepokri. Fortunately, the retinue had arrived ahead of us. These mountain women go faster than our ponies for a number of reasons, but mostly because they know the roads so well that, in spite of heavy loads on their backs, they will leave the road, take a short, steep path that lands them on the top of the next hill before we are half way up. They had opened the packs and rugs and we found the blankets spread out on chairs and tables in front of the fireplace being dried. They were drenched. Down on the floor, very close to the fire, sat Blessing. He had taken our wet shoes and was holding them patiently and carefully before the fire trying to dry them. He does not speak in our presence. Thousands of years of sweeper traditions have taught him silence.

## WE BREAK CAMP

At five-fifteen the next morning Naspati rapped to say that there was light in the eastern sky and a small patch of blue, and that we would attempt a day's march. Chota hazri was immediately brought in by the Bawarchi, who announced that the coolies were now soon to have their early tea (which was really Tibetan but-

tered tea) and that we would have our breakfast about eight-thirty.

To break camp daily is an exhilarating experience and every morning, new. We had a most heartening breakfast. Naspati knew evidently more than we did about the white man's appetite in these high ranges. That walking and riding, climbing up mountainsides, down valleys, fording streams, fighting against cloud and rain and mountain driving gales, would increase one's need for calories. There were Quaker oats, well cooked, bacon and eggs, bread and celery and jam and coffee—almost eight thousand feet above sea level—over a mile and a half up in the air above Calcutta. We enjoyed this delicious breakfast. Before we had finished, however, the caravan had started. Always Naspati, Bawarchi, the two syce, and little Blessing waited to go with us in the rear guard.

The morning gave small promise of sun, but I could see that every morning gave promise of sun to Naspati because he knew that we must reach the height of our ten thousand feet before night fall. And I learned, as I had not learned before, that in order to reach mountain tops one must go through deep valleys. I looked for short cuts. But there were no bridges over the valleys. They must be gone through. The steep descent must be made. The rocky streams must be forded. The heat down in the valleys endured, and then comes the inevitable climb to the mountaintop. Every day has brought its valley and its mountaintop. Although



PRAYING DONE BY WATER POWER



every night we find ourselves two or three thousand feet higher than we were the night before, yet much of the day has been spent in going down hill and in passing through the valleys.

#### A CARAVANSERAI

The day was thrillingly dangerous. I have named the ponies from necessity. The Saheb's pony shies at the slightest rustle in the forest, and sometimes I fear he will leap over a precipice. He shall be called "The Foolish One." But my old brown steady takes the hills with intelligence. When we are going down these narrow paths wet and slippery with the shower of wet leaves on them, he keeps his hind legs together and slides down the difficult spots, holding his forefeet steady until the hither feet have arrived. I am obliged to call him "The Intelligent One." He has slipped once or twice. The wonder to me is that they can go at all and carry us on their backs, and if I thought too much of it at night, I should shiver with such fear that I would walk the entire way. Before midday another cloud-burst had filled our horizon, and we were obliged to turn in at a mountain Caravanserai. It was nothing more or less than a huge shed. We rode in on horse-back. The ponies were as grateful as we to come in out of the downpour and to be protected from the dense cloud which was all about us. The syce took the horses at once and taking off the saddles, rubbing their raw knees with carbolated salve, tied them in the front room

—if room it may be called—of the shed. The divisions of the shed were more theoretical than real. Indeed, about four bamboo poles standing from earth floor to roof made the partitions. The second section was reserved for the goats. There were two. The third section, divided in the same airy fashion by an occasional bamboo pole, was reserved for us. The chickens, of course, roamed at will into any and all of the sections. It was a relief to see that the goats were tied.

While we ate our lunch of sandwiches and drank hot tea, which the Bawarchi soon had ready, I sang "Where My Caravan Has Rested," and thought of the many men in spotless evening suits who have sung this ditty to beautifully dressed audiences in America and the West, little picturing the real Caravanserai. But I'm rather glad that neither the singer nor the audience visualizes it; it's best to leave it poetry.

The family who kept the place lived in a huge room back of our section. This had a mud wall partition. The cookstove was in the middle of the room. This, too, was made of mud, and there was no chimney and no hole in the roof or side for the smoke to blow through.

The influence of Buddha is very strong among the Lepchas, and most of these hill people whose occasional homes we passed as we went down toward the valley, were Lepchas. They believed in being able to live peaceably in conditions *as they found them*.

"Why don't you have a chimney or a window to let





AN OLD TIBETAN WOMAN COUNTS HER PRAYER BEADS THE WHOLE DAY LONG





out the smoke?" we asked, covering our eyes and rushing out of the door.

"Oh, it isn't our custom, and if we did, rain would come in, and when the smoke gets too thick you can easily close your eyes."

After the fire in their kitchen had gone out, and consequently the smoke, we went in again and found it immaculate. Their beautiful brass plates shone like mirrors and were set up in racks against the wall, as were their high brass tumblers.

#### A TIBETAN TEA SHOP

The last and only bazaar we passed through that day was a small one. Every member of our caravan took advantage of it. We looked in as we passed, and seated at the log table were ten people, each with a high brass tumbler of buttered tea. In one pot the Tibetan woman boils the milk, the sugar, and the butter. In the other, the tea. And when her customers come she pours the two ingredients together in the brass cup.

The coolie women were laughing and shouting and joking, and one would not dream they had gone up thousands of feet, down thousands more and back again, carrying on their backs two heavy suit cases each or bundles of bedding and food. After they finished tea they all enjoyed a few cheap cigarettes.

Only Blessing sat alone on the floor away in the corner with his back to the others. Poor, little sweeper

Buddu. The Tibetans had no caste, but he had known since babyhood that he was a sweeper, and so he sat alone.

The last human being we met that wonderful day as we climbed the steep mountainside, was a little mountain milk boy. The Saheb says it is always wise to buy one's milk at the bottom of the hill as they start up, because none of the hill people will carry anything but pure milk up the hill. The water is added on top. But this lovely hill boy did not interest me because of his bamboo container of milk. In his button hole was a huge bouquet of ivory white orchids. Oh, lovers of orchids on Fifth Avenue, who stand longingly in front of the window where three of these rare flowers are displayed, come to the high ranges of the Himalayas and feast your eyes and your souls on orchids.

At sunset we reached Tonglu, over ten thousand feet, almost two miles high. There were no bazaars within thousands of feet down valleys. There were no animals just here. There was the Dak Bungalow and a grim but kindly *chokidar* and peace.

Blessed be Dak Bungalows!

## CHAPTER VI

### IN GOD'S GARDEN

I WAS walking in the Garden of God. It was plainly that. In every country great and small in the entire Oriental world I had walked in gardens of rare beauty. For there are none made by the hands of man more beautiful or more expressive of the artistic imagination of human beings than those made by the people of Japan. There the people bend in hard toil of long hours over the rough fields, but leave them abloom with beauty. Up and down those little islands jutting out of the sea, these lovers of the beautiful have made a paddy field more to be admired than a glowing emerald, and a cabbage patch a picture forever to be remembered. Pictures like this I have seen in Ceylon and China and Burma and in other places in the Orient where hands never grow weary if they are making beauty and producing food for their loved ones; yet, after all, they are men's gardens. But here, ten thousand feet above the plain, on craggy height, midst icy clouds, I strode the hills of God and found myself in his garden. He planted it, watered it, and gave increase. No human hand assisted him, and few human eyes indeed have ever looked upon it.

In the traveler's guest book that the *chokidar* brings

as a last ceremony before one leaves the Dak Bungalow, he writes his name, his country, his feelings—that is, if he can express the feelings he has had in such a lofty place. But before you write your name you become consumed with curiosity as to who was here last, and when, from what country they came. You count up the people and the years. In turning over the old soft yellow pages of the book you are astonished to find that one page contains the names of all the visitors for years! You find that the guests in these high places average four a year! I do not wonder. The trip is not a holiday jaunt. It is a serious undertaking. We found ourselves traveling slowly. The altitude was having its way with us and every motion was measured. We were in the realm of clouds, the paths were unbelievably narrow and the precipices fatal if we or our ponies made one misstep. Often the turn in the path was sudden and a cliff at the side hid it from view and the cloud pressing in kept the warning veiled from us. The Saheb would usually be ahead on these high paths and would stop in order that we might take the dangerous curves with our ponies following closely on, together, for voices did not carry far in these heights and we could not see twenty feet ahead of us. Here we were near the top of God's world with no human life about us, thousands—ten, eleven, and twelve thousand feet above the plains. The Bawarchi assured us that to go for fresh milk one must take a day's journey down into the valley, three miles down and the same distance back



### THE WHEEL OF LIFE

In the center are the three Cardinal Sins: the Pig represents ignorance; the Cock, lust; the Snake, anger





again. We gazed at our tins of Carnation cream and were thankful for every one of the fifty-seven or one hundred and fifty-seven varieties of any edible thing that is sent to the ends of the earth in a tin can!

But when the clouds would break what gardens we found ourselves in! At one rift in the clouds I counted seven ranges of mountains covered with giant rhododendron trees in bloom—carmine, purple, mauve, white. The mountains were on fire with them. I am perfectly sure anyone will hesitate to believe it, but there they were, huge mountain trees. When the Sahab once described the mountain rhododendron to me, I pictured bushes. We have these bushes in our gardens in India as well as in the West and on the foothills. But I had never before entered the gateway to God's Gardens in the Himalayas, these gardens that are nearer to the heavens than any others in the wide world.

The radiant blossoms of these rhododendrons matched the grandeur of the mother tree. Often as I rode on pony back quietly in the wooded path through this forest of beauty where the only sound was the tread of our mountain ponies and the occasional call of a lover bird to his sweetheart, I would reach up and pluck a flower from one of the low branches. The rhododendron blossoms grow in clusters. I plucked one day a cluster of pink ones. It was so big and heavy that I carried it with difficulty. It was a whole centerpiece in itself. It was made up of many bell-like flowers. I counted them. There were twenty-six on one stem,

and each pink bell was the size of a tiger lily! In spite of storms that played about their heads these giant trees held high their strong bare arms and in their hands offered flaming red torches to the gods of the Himalayas. Against the great white sky they spread a carpet of red velvet for the mountain gods to walk down to earth upon.

Every tree of every genus was trying its utmost to stretch up to match the grandeur of the mountains. The rhododendron arborium was easily the king of the forest. The rhododendron barbartum had a beautiful bark of soft purple which gave an unusual effect as one looked through the forest about him. On the floor of this garden were soft little bamboo shoots about a foot high. They seemed to have been planted by God to cover up the ugly dead leaves that had fallen and any other thing that might remind one of death and decay. Indeed, every day after leaving the Place of the Thunderbolt there had been evidences that we were in God's own garden. When we were down in the valleys that were only six or seven thousand feet above sea level we would pass fields of rare beauty. Often they would be covered with both white and yellow calla lilies. By the side of the mountain paths these lilies would open their hearts to us and tell us how hungry they were up in these lonely mountain valleys for human admiration. Then lilies of the valley, and dogwood, and barberry, and verbineum, hydrangea, white rose, magnolia of many varieties, holly, wild mango and a lotus tree



THE CARPENTER MONK MAKES A PRAYER CYLINDER

The rolls of rice paper are plainly seen with myriads of written lines exclaiming with monotonous repetition, "Hail to thee, Jewel of the Lotus."



whose blossoms were mountain cousins to the "flamboyant," which is one of the most colorful bits of colorful India.

The barks of the trees fascinated me. If I could but have taken a picture in color, it would have been a revelation. It was not always the bark alone, though that was a challenging study, but the lavish variety of parasites, the most lovely of which were the incomparable orchids. At times no bark was visible at all. They were so completely covered by lichens, and these of rainbow colorings. They were gray, pure white, sea green, olive green, rust color, orange, gold, pink, and black—and all decided colors. It was a ravishing picture. Had there been no flowers at all, the barks would still have made it a gay garden.

### A GIANT MAGNOLIA

In one of the respites when the gales drove back the clouds from our immediate vicinity, we looked about us in wonder. Yonder on the steep mountain my eye was arrested by a great white object on a bare tree. It looked like the drooping wings of some huge white bird, though I could not see the head.

"No, no," laughed Naspati, "that is not a bird; it is a flower. The syce will get it for you." Then he mumbled in Tibetan to the syce to get the white flower for the Memsahab. I slipped down from my pony and watched this daring boy go back from the path into the forest, and finally we saw him climb and emerge on the

limb of that particular tree. Of course Naspati, the Bawarchi and the other syce and Blessing kept up a constant stream of screaming instructions to him as to just how to go and announce to him when he had arrived. The thing he brought back to me was too exquisite to be real. I found it to be one magnolia blossom of the *magnolia campbelli* variety. It was chaste ivory, and when I measured it I found its petals to be ten inches long. We stood around it, an admiring group, the Saheb, Naspati, Bawarchi, the proud syce and little Buddu. The syce carried it the remainder of the day's march until we reached the Dak Bungalow at Sandakfu, where we were to spend the night, and then in this little shack over twelve thousand feet above the sea we sat down to a dinner of Heinz' soup with this rare floral decoration in the center of our table.

We thought little about people, for we seldom met anyone. Perhaps once or sometimes twice a day we would meet a Tibetan shepherd, or a coolie woman, or a Tibetan sent out to inspect the road. Much of the way during these days we had been on the direct road to Tibet. For although that little country does not allow people of other countries to enter her borders, she does want some of their products brought in to her. All of her Chinese silks now come not across the Szechuan border but first by boat to Calcutta, and then by train to Darjeeling, and from Darjeeling they are taken on the backs of humans to the very "Top of the World."

One day we met a Tibetan wrapped in a large blanket of pure sheep's wool. He was followed by a large flock of mountain sheep. He carried no stick in his hand, yet his sheep seemed to follow him. Then we began to see that each little sheep had what seemed to be a bamboo basket over his face. It proved to be a muzzle over his mouth to keep him from eating. By keeping his flock hungry the shepherd could afford to go without a crook. They would follow their master like lambs up the steep paths and into the valleys and not a sheep would stray away. This Tibetan looked just as inscrutably wise and clever as that fact indicates, and he passed us by without a word.

Now and then we caught a glimpse of an occasional Tibetan cow. They have long, black, shiny hair with a long, flowing tail and sharp-pointed horns and in appearance they were very much like the yak.

## BIRDS

From the beginning of our trip to the end we were not out of the sound of lovely bird calls nor out of the sight—except in heavy clouds—of birds of the most brilliant hues. We were not a little surprised to find the paradise birds with their beautiful long tails here on the heights. Then the "Lal Rajah," "Pini Rani" birds always afforded us much pleasure. Literally translated it means the Red King and Yellow Queen. When you saw the brilliant red Rajah you would shortly see his yellow queen, and usually on the same



tree and the identical limb. In real life no Rajah ever appeared in his precincts so often with his Rani, but in the bird world it was a different story. The king's head was crowned with royal purple, while his mate had a scarf of brown. They were a royal pair indeed. The mocking birds, the nightingale, the Minah bird, so talkative that they were put in cages to be listened to the more closely—these birds were all to be found in these heights. It was tantalizing to hear the birds we could not see, and yet all day long we would hear them and sing with them their songs. One sang the first and last strains of "Three Blind Mice" to his mate. Another sang "Forever" from the Hallelujah Chorus. In all truth I must say that the bird who sang "Forever" with such religious fervor is called by the bird men "The Brain Fever" bird. They say he sings "Brain Fever," or is it because the constant repetition gives humans brain fever on the plains? But we were two thousand feet up in the air from "Brain Fever" and not even continuous repetition of his song could give us this disease. We were in the heavens literally. So the Saheb rechristened him the "Hallelujah Bird."

### ORCHID DAY

There may be places in the world where orchids are more plentiful and more beautiful than in the Himalayas but I have yet to discover them. Even at the Eyrie, our breakfast table was crowned with orchids, but as we went on and on we saw other and



THE PRAYER CYLINDER

One turn of the wheel wafts a million prayers heavenward



more unusual varieties. One day we were surrounded by myriads of orchid festoons hanging down with the profusion of wistaria. Mile after mile as we rode through the forests we would look high on the trees and find orchids abloom. Sometimes we looked below us to find them thriving on old trunks which still had enough life to nourish the orchid. The *Dendrobium nobili* was perhaps the most common, but I am not a botanist, and I thank God always that I did *not* have to be one to enjoy to the full this day which I shall remember as long as I live, as Orchid Day. Toward the end of the day we passed a little cowherd boy at the entrance to a valley with a fifty-dollar boutonniere, jauntily starting up the long steep climb to his home, which was a littleatched-roofed hut nestling in the side of the mountain. How blissfully unconscious he was of the commercial value of that boutonniere! I wished for a moment that I could be as unconscious of all commercial values. But if I were, I wondered, how far my taste could be affected and what I would choose for its own sake. I was glad he chose the orchid with a purple velvet heart! It made Orchid Day complete! After we had discussed this from the backs of our ponies, the mahab broke the silence with this ode to the orchid:

Basket of beauty thou,  
Hung aloft on leafless tree,  
With swaying leaf of green  
And bursting pod beneath,  
With yellow bloom

And scent of tuberose pure,  
Thine all-pervasive presence sweet  
Doth make the woods  
A Paradise.

#### PRAYER

Long before daylight—and it comes early in the mountains—I was awakened by a strange mumbling sound. One human voice in a low, monotonous tone without pause, seemed to be just outside, and with my eyes still heavy with sleep I looked out of my window to find the Bawarchi saying his prayers with his Tibetan rosary. He was saying, “Om Mani Padmi Hung”—“Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus, Hail!” I knew he was praying to the Pure One for a clear day, that the Saheb’s party might make the march and that no misfortune should occur to mar the progress we were making.

Not only did our devout Buddhist cook pray but all through these gardens of God we were awed into worshipful, prayerful silence. Often, perhaps most often, it was an outburst of adoration to the great Creator—to the living Spirit—alive in all nature to-day who had with such lavish hand made these mountains of such beauty. We would start out on a crisp, clear morning so early that the rising sun and the low descending silver moon were both in the sky, then Aurora’s chariots of white clouds drawn by her gray steeds would race before us, paling the moon and making way for the great sun himself. With the monarchs of the snows

ever above, and beyond us glaciers ages old, we now and then got a glimpse of our littleness, of man's long struggle back of us and before us, and our present share in it. At times, seated on ponies or walking on the soft leaves, the Saheb would burst forth in a prayer of praise and longing. It was wonderful to be just honest with God—to pray when we felt like it, which we often did.

Buddhist priests too have felt the atmosphere of prayer in these gardens of God. Here one is aglow with hopeful expectancy, a feeling of mighty exaltation fills one, and one climbs as though his joyful hope lay at the top. Here many Buddhist prayers have gone up to the "Pure Jewel of the Lotus." Believing that prayers actually ascend to him, the Lamas have been logical, and they have said, "The more prayers we start in motion, the more will reach their goal."

#### PRAYER BY THE WATER WHEEL

They have carried it out, and with apparent success. Often throughout our days when we heard the gurgling of a tiny mountain stream trickling down the rocky path, working hard to reach its level, we would see what seemed to be a human shelter. It was thatched-roofed and built against the mountainside over the stream. In the center of it and on a pole which revolved as the water worked its way along, was a large cylinder of many rolls of thin paper and on the paper were written the prayers of the people. Sometimes a few hundred, sometimes a few thousand, and sometimes

tens of thousands. With the force of the little trickling stream the pole revolved, the prayers were set in motion and they left this earthly Garden of God to ascend to the heaven where the Pure One sits on his lotus throne.

On one day's march through the valleys I counted six prayer wheels that were left all alone day and night, always turning, and the "horses of the wind" carrying the incense of their praise to the heavens.



## CHAPTER VII

### "SAHEB, THE HEAVENS ARE SPEAKING"

**W**E were sheltered in a cave. The Saheb had piled up the rocks to make it more secure. For we were eleven thousand feet above the plains. Seven days back we had left all traces of our own race and thirty-six hours before we had seen the last human being on the crags. We were at the top of the forest line. We were above the human line. The clouds were driving in, the thunder roared and the flash of the lightning was terrifying as it was majestic. The Saheb, Naspati and I withdrew into the tiny cave. The storm stilled us. After crashing thunder and brilliant lightning the voice of Naspati broke the silence.

"Saheb," said our bronzed companion, looking up with a reverent smile, "Saheb, the heavens are speaking."

The long, flashing blades of lightning swung back and forth in devastating havoc above our heads. Limbs from giant trees fell smoking to the ground. Two defiant, crackling, growling pines were beheaded and rolled crashing down the gully. We shrank and shivered. But Naspati, our Tibetan friend, who knew his mountains, put his brawny hand on the Saheb's knee saying, "Listen, Saheb." With the wonder of children

we waited silently. And out across the vast, unconquered valley came the rolling voice of heaven. It must be remembered that in the vernacular of the Himalayan folk, the deep, mysterious tone which answers the lightning's signal is called "the voice of the sky."

"Do not those voices speak deep peace? Know you what they say? Listen, Saheb," insisted the Buddhist. "They say that God is near, that from these heights he needs must send the mighty streams that bathe the plains and make them grow. They tell the story of a watching God that needs must slay these stalwart trees to make a path for the descending torrents. The crashing, Saheb, and the cracking is but the laughter of these stricken angels of the heavenly heights that God hath chosen them to die. For a generation they have been lifting up their spreading arms in adoration and petition, hoping that their day of sacrifice would come. How they toiled through day and night, thrusting their myriad feet into the toughening hills! God bids them stand and hold the rocks between their toes. This forms the reservoir where are stored the million barrels between the storms. What think you, Saheb, is it easier to grip the slopes through years of strain or yield the life in outlet for the flow? Oh, Saheb, hear the heavens speak! They bear a parable to our hearts. They bid us hold the heights nor fear. Their God is ours. This twofold purpose fills the universe of life. While God directs, we bear the burdens of the strong. When he wills, we yield before the storm." We crawled out from



A LOFTY LONELY MENDONG



the cave overcome with religious emotion, stirred by Naspati's sermon of the storm. There we three stood erect with faces instinctively lifted to the clouds. The Saheb bared his head. The moments were heavy with a mystic communion with the Almighty. We were in his presence. God was working before us. The heavens *were* speaking, and here were we on mountain heights, midway between the sky and plain, permitted in holy awe to share the eternal confidence of God.

Naspati is a religious man and a devout one. He is a Tibetan, and therefore he is Buddhist, for every Tibetan is an adherent of that form of Buddhism known as Lamaism. Although Guatama (Buddha) was born in India not far from Benares, he is scarcely worshiped in that country outside of Burma, but up in the hills and mountain regions of the Himalayas, even to Tibet, the table-land of the world, Buddha is universally worshiped. This worship, however, is controlled by the guiding hand of the Dalai Lama, who is the Pope of Buddhism and rules his spiritual and temporal kingdom from the locked walls of Lhasa.

Lamaism stands in a relationship to primitive Buddhism similar to that in which Roman Catholicism, so long as the temporal power of the Pope existed, stood to Christianity. Its real history commences with Srong Tsan Gampo, who was born a little after 600 A. D., and who is said in the Chinese chronicles to have entered in 634 into diplomatic relationship with Tai Tsung, one of the emperors of the T'ang Dynasty of China. He

was the founder of the present capital, now known as Lhasa; and in the year 622 A. D., the same year as that of Mohammed's flight to Mecca, he began the formal introduction of Buddhism into Tibet. The emperor's zeal for Buddhism is said to have been shared and supported by his two queens, Brsibon, a princess from Nepal, and Wen Ching, a princess from China. The latter brought sacred relics, books, and pictures, for which two large monasteries were erected. The two queens have subsequently become divine personages and are worshiped under the name of the two Dara-Eke—glorious mothers—being regarded as incarnations of the wife of Siva, representing respectively two of the qualities which she (Siva) personifies—divine vengeance and divine love.

The Dalai Lama's political authority is confined to the borders of Tibet, but he is the acknowledged head of the Buddhist church in Mongolia and in China, though most of the Buddhists of China do not recognize his spiritual power nor are they moved by his spiritual guidance.

### I ENTER A LAMASERY

The Vatican of Buddhism is the great Lamasery of Lhasa. The riches of this lamasery are spoken of in awed whispers by the mountain priests who have learned the facts and some of whom have been permitted to move in and out among the treasures when they themselves were acolytes. Those of us who have



THE MONASTERY AT PAMIONCHI





studied even a little of the art of the Orient realize how strong the influence of Buddhism is in art in all its phases. The most beautiful spots in China, in Japan, in Burma, and in the Himalayas are crowned by a Buddhist monastery, shrine or pagoda. Love of the beautiful has gone hand in hand with the march of Buddhism across the Orient—the carvings in crystal, jade, lapis lazuli, turquoise, the gold and brass, the painting on silk in colors that have retained their glory for hundreds of years. These fill the temples, and especially the lamaseries. Not being permitted yet to enter Tibet, we journeyed to the richest lamasery in the world outside Tibet, at Pamionchi.

#### THE SUBLIME PERFECT LOTUS

We found ourselves walking on the wide, stony road which led to the gateway of the great monastery of Pamionchi, the Sublime Perfect Lotus. The buildings were on a mountaintop and the ascent was steep. The road had been worn smooth by thousands of soul-hungry pilgrims during hundreds of years. Just before the gate were several stupas, built there by grateful pilgrims to lay up merit for the next world. The approach to the main courtyard was long, after entering the gateway. Once there, however, my first interest was in a carpenter monk. Some monks are farmers, some dairymen, some carpenters, masons, tailors, artists. The monastery is large, and must have a variety of helpers, all of whom must be monks or nuns.

## A PRAYER CYLINDER

The carpenter monk was making a new prayer wheel. It was a cylinder nine feet high and four and one half feet in diameter. It was set up two feet from the floor and revolved on a spindle. It was my good fortune that the prayer cylinder was still incomplete, for I could see just how it was being made. The cylinder was packed tight with rolls of rice paper on which were printed fifty thousand prayers, so the monk told me. He was fast boarding it up and forever after would the prayers be concealed.

"And why do you put them in a cylinder?" I asked, innocently.

"So that any humble pilgrim may come and with one turn of the wheel may send fifty thousand prayers on the horses of the wind to heaven."

There were fifty thousand "Om Mani Padmi Hung"s" written on the papers in that one barrel-like cylinder. Underneath was a wooden handle. The cylinder would soon be painted in gay and lovely colors with "Hail to Thee, Sublime Perfect Lotus" on the exterior. I wondered if Monsieur Coué had not visited Pamionchi before giving to our decade his revolving formula. For underneath a completed cylinder that was in a room by itself sat a weary pilgrim, hungry and thirsting after righteousness. As she pulled with all her might the handle swinging around the great cylinder she would move along one bead on her rosary

and with each revolution would repeat "Om Mani Padmi Hung."

### THE LAMAS

The Father Superior Lama was resplendent in a plum-colored robe of Chinese satin, with a beautiful shawl of the same color draped gracefully on his shoulder. A true dignitary we had met, for he it is who anoints with holy water the reigning sovereign. His wearing this color, however, told us that he had never taken a vow against flesh eating or drinking intoxicants.

The head lama's scribe was more of an ascetic. He wore a yellow robe with a plum-colored shawl. And the yellow robe signified that he had taken a vow never to take intoxicating liquor and never to eat meat or fowl. The head lama, when I asked if I might take his picture, was so deliberate in telling me that he had never had it taken in his life, that I had snapped his smile before he finished, but I hope he has already forgiven me.

While we sat drinking tea with the lamas, into the courtyard came a dozen women coolies carrying what seemed to be large boxes. Each woman had one, and each box was covered and carried by a large kerchief. The lamas explained that these were a part of the one hundred and eight volumes of the Buddhist Bible. They had been in the near-by village for a week's revival, whither the priests had gone to teach and ex-

plain the sacred word to the people. One room of the lamasery is given over exclusively to the one hundred and eight books of the Bible. They are so large that they cover the walls. The words are printed on rice paper on sheets thirty inches long by six inches wide. Perhaps five hundred sheets are in each section; a flat board on the top and bottom keep them together and a bookmark of embroidered satin ties them.

The one hundred and eight books contain a variety of material. They tell of Buddha's life; where he went, what he saw, what he felt, and what his instructions were to his followers concerning how best to live. Many of the books are in Tibetan, with always a few Sanscrit words interspersed. Some of the sacred canon of the Hinyana or little vehicle is in Pali and is the teaching of Guatama himself. There is also the Thera Vada, or The Way of the Elders, at which I fancy Tibetan youth rebels, just as the youth of all ages has done.

Four of the truths were laid down as the four pillars of the "Way of the Elders."

First, Verily existence is suffering, therefore it is evil.

Second, The source of suffering or evil is desire.

Third, Suffering may be brought to an end by complete destruction of desire.

Fourth, the way to accomplish this complete destruction is by the eightfold Path.

a. Right seeing

b. Right aspiring



THE HEAD LAMA, WHO SAID HE HAD NEVER HAD HIS PICTURE TAKEN  
He anoints the reigning sovereign of Sikkim





- c.* Right doing
- d.* Right speaking
- e.* Right living
- f.* Right endeavoring
- g.* Right remembering
- h.* Right reflecting.

Perhaps nowhere is Guatama Buddha more the central object of adoration and worship than in Sikhim and Tibet.

### BUDDHISM IN PRACTICAL LIFE

One of these fascinating, inspiring days on the mountaintop we saw Naspati in a new light. He had been our protector and a father to the retinue.

The paths on the mountainsides were wet. The Saheb and I had been resting our ponies for a few hours and had walked many miles. The ponies with the syce were ahead of us some distance, but a cry can be heard afar-off on the mountains, and we heard a cry. Was it the ponies or the syce boys! Naspati ran on faster than we, and when we all arrived, we found the ponies and boys still frightened. The ponies were rearing on their hind legs and had refused to go forward.

"What is it, Naspati?" demanded the Saheb. "Nothing but a little snake, one of the Perfect One's creatures," answered Naspati with an unflurried though not altogether calm face. Then we looked and up away from the road was a krait, the snake whose bite is so deadly that no victim survives. The Saheb picked

up a stone, determined to make away with this deadly menace to horses and men, but Naspati stayed his hand.

"I beg of you, Saheb, I cannot let you kill him. Think whose spirit may be within him, and he has not harmed you!"

Thus spoke the Buddhist to the Christian.

### BUDDHIST NUNS

The women carriers of the sacred canon I discovered later were nuns who did the drudgery work of the lamasery and who lived in a nunnery near by.

The monastery consisted of many buildings and the buildings of many rooms. In one spacious room I found one thousand pictures of Buddha painted on the walls. The buildings had two and three stories, but the first story was called Lha-Khang, or House of Prayer. And the main hall was eighty feet long by forty feet wide, the span supported by carved pillars. Down before the gorgeous altar were two great seats, one at the right for the spiritual head of the monastery, and the seat on the left for the temporal head of the group.

Near the outside door was an impressive-looking seat for the marshal, who was an ornately decorated lama whose long, hard stick looked too well used. He reminded me of the gayly caparisoned beadles of the Church of the Madeleine in Paris. The young lamas and the little acolytes of varying size and ages looked

at him slowly and respectfully. Three gilded idols which are usually found on a Buddhist altar were in this altar. The center is, of course, Guatama Buddha himself. In Lama temples the one at the left is Guru Rimpoche, the founder of Lamaism (I discovered that there were as many founders of Lamaism as there were discoverers of America), and the one on the right is Guru Cheresi, who is the god of mercy and the patron saint of Lamaism in Tibet. His spirit is even now incarnate in the present Dalai Lama, at least, so the Tibetans tell me, and it was he that sang for the first time "Om Mani Padmi Hung," which is, I suppose, written more often, sung more often, prayed more often than any other four words in Tibet, in Sikhim, and in Nepal—"Hail to Thee, Jewel."

When I asked a priest how many "Hail to Thee, Perfect Jewel in the Lotus, Hail!" there were in the cylinder, he replied, "Oh, a million—or perhaps, two million or perhaps fifty thousand—who knows?"

The prayer room of the monastery is lighted by little brass bowls of *ghi* in which are burning wicks. The air is faintly perfumed by flowers, by burning incense, and by the dampness of the ages. One priest blew the great conch shells to call the priests to worship. Another one in the procession blew on beautiful trumpets of copper and silver set with turquoises and rubies. Later a priest took up two strange horns and blew a weird sound. "Human thigh bones" echoed the accompanying lama—bones of a former lama!

Part of the worship was the striking of bronze gongs, whose long liquid resonance set one dreaming and longing for a better day and a better world for these devoted men.

### THE WHEEL OF LIFE

The paintings on the lamasery walls were worthy of study. Of all of these the wheel of life was the most significant. The mill of the gods grinds slowly but surely, for the pictures, in lurid colors, show the Great Wheel of Life in the center inevitably grinding out each human's destiny. Heaven is at the top and hell at the bottom. If a man lays up enough merit in this world, he will be reborn in heaven; but if not, he will be reborn into the animal world, a world of tantalizing ghosts, or in Hell. The circle in the center represents the three original sins. The pig represents ignorance, the cock, lust, and the snake, anger.

I have sat by the hour and watched the pilgrims turn the prayer wheel. Some of them never go to their fields without a small hand prayer wheel, and what does my old lady think as she turns and turns the wheel hour in and hour out? Her lips say, "Hail to Thee, Jewel of the Lotus," but since she has learned that existence is evil, she is longing to escape from future existence altogether and reach Nirvana—or she may more humbly long for a better fate in the next incarnation. She has heard that the repetition of "*Om Mani Padmi Hung*" will bar the door of other worlds of existence.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FOUR DAYS IN THE CLOUDS

**T**HERE was Buddu. There was always Buddu. From the time our retinue left the Eyrie until it returned I was never unconscious of Buddu. I am still conscious of him. For Buddu was our little sweeper outcaste. I had boasted to myself that I had been able to stretch my imagination and vicariously feel with this great depressed class of India's people. I had visited the villages of outcastes—not one, but many. I had seen these people keep to one side of the street. I had watched one of them crouch low to the ground while the high-caste man passed, that his polluting shadow might not fall on him. But I was mistaken, for I had not met little Blessing. Delicate features and delicate, undernourished body, a gentle soul and a spirit of loving service that brings tears to my eyes as I write about him.

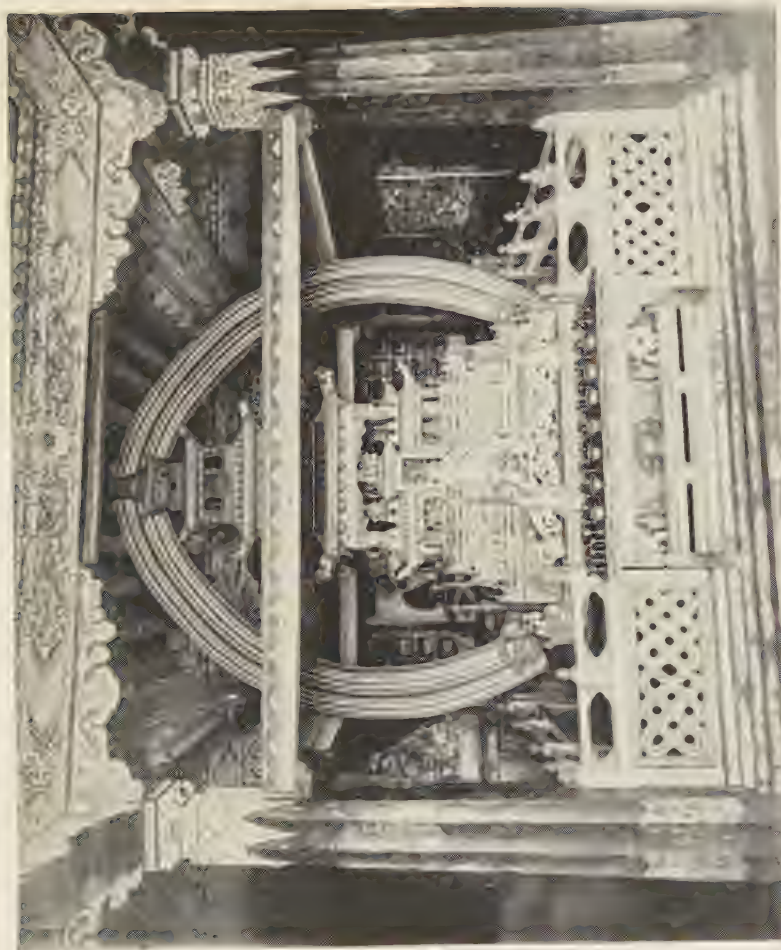
On one of our long marches through the forests we halted in a clearing for something to eat. The coolie women were more hungry than tired, they said, and they dropped the burdens from their backs with laughing jokes. My admiration and wonder at the mountain woman coolie increased daily. She carried burdens on her back that would break even the Saheb's. A strap over her head holds the load. Her face has a strength

of beauty which is admirable and she always wears a smile; often, too, as she climbs these rugged mountains she sings, and as she sings, she knits. Think of carrying such a burden with hands free to knit. And think of singing with back weighed down and hands employed. I looked at these women as they let their burdens slide down to free their backs to prepare their own lunch, in amazing wonder and admiration, and knew that no matter how hard life's burdens might be, I should think of these mountain women and lift my shoulders to the load.

But Buddu did not give me courage. He gave me heartache and a burden that seemed heavier than any carried even by my happy friends. Buddu was only one of fifty-five million outcastes. The burden grew heavier as I thought about it. And somehow I am unable to let it down from my back as the smiling mountain coolie did. It keeps its place.

That day, when we sat on a log in the pouring rain eating sandwiches and drinking hot tea from the thermo-flask, we were accompanied by an orchestra of laughter and jollity. Suddenly one of the coolie women noticed that Buddu was far away from the others and seated with his back turned to them. A generous-hearted mother carried over a tin cup of hot tea to him, but he refused. Now, the women knew that he was a human little boy of ten. They knew that he was hungry. He had walked up steep grades for nine long miles—and the uphill miles are the longest miles in





THE RAINBOW ALTAR, SHORTLY "SANDHUPAL," THE REPRESENTATION OF HINDU IN HEAVEN





the world. He needed food. But he only shook his head. The Bawarchi went next, and again he shook his head. Finally dear old Naspati went and begged the little outcaste to eat. But he only shook his head. Tradition was stronger than love. It was stronger than hunger, stronger than the pleading words of Naspati. Three thousand years of outcaste ancestry had made him refuse to eat in the presence of caste men, and finally, after all had finished, I turned my head. I saw them give him our plates as they would give them to a dog. And I realized for the first time what *scavenger* and *sweeper* and *outcaste* meant.

These days found us struggling to reach the summit of our route. We were experiencing the wildest, most cinematographical ride of our lives. Blinding, cutting wind. The clouds so dense we could not see fifteen feet ahead of us. We dared not stay on our ponies' backs. We walked or, rather, we felt our way. Avalanches often filled the path so that we had to pick our way over rocks of ice. Precipices thousands of feet yawned beside us. Sometimes the path itself had broken and we had to climb along above it. Sometimes we found ourselves on the very crest of it, only the path on which we walked loomed up between the mammoth chasms. I felt a far removed kinship to the Everest climbers. Even Douglas Fairbanks would have had a thrill and perhaps even shivered to come to a sudden turning in the path and find before him a sheer abyss about two miles deep.

We had left Tonglu that morning in a dawn of glory. The brilliant stars at half past four had given promise of a clear sunrise. For a few moments there was a blaze of sunlight. The foreground was crowded with blooming rhododendrons of every hue—magenta, pink, carmine, and white; then, farther back, the clouds pushing in—clouds in billows, clouds raving like a wild ocean, clouds resting between mountains as quiet as a lake; clouds leaping out like sea dragons, clouds like icebergs. Out of these varying oceans of clouds away on the far horizon loomed black peaks like lovely islands jutting out of the sea. They were the farther ranges. Once that morning when the brilliant white light of the sun touched it, miles up above the clouds loomed Everest and Kanchenjunga and all their family of these proud monarchs of the snows.

But it was only for a moment—this glimpse of glory. Clouds came rolling in on Aurora's chariot and we moved in them and of them for four long days and nights.

During these days I often wondered what kind of cloud I was inhabiting. Was I Cirrus or Stratus or Cumulus? When studying physical geography so long ago I little dreamed of some day inhabiting the clouds. Now that I was *in* them, they seemed no particular variety. They were just cloud, wet cloud, dense cloud.

Our pith helmets were soaked and were mere water sheds, that gave both shoulders an equal drenching. After a march of fourteen miles we stumbled against

our little Dak Bungalow where we were to spend these days of waiting. Over two miles up in the sky we entered our little hut to dry our clothing, to start the camp fire, and to prepare our food. The Tibetans soon had their hot "buttered tea" and were once again smiling.

We found ourselves feeling the altitude. To bend over was exhausting and going upgrade was impossible. It seemed miraculous that out of a little tin can with the help of a fire we could have the same kind of soup that America was sipping. And when the hot vegetables (also from a tin can) came on the table, we found the clever Bawarchi had first filled soup plates with boiling water and served the vegetable plates on top of them and so kept our food warm enough to eat. In this altitude we had to boil eggs at least six minutes to make even a soft-boiled egg palatable. At every turn we were reminded that we were over two miles up in the air.

Each morning brought hope and longing for the rift in the clouds. But one long, cloudy day passed. We realized that we should have to exercise each day to keep fit for future marches. The ponies, too, must be exercised. So we spent as much time as we could out of doors. We had not anticipated being prisoners in the clouds, so we had brought few books with us. Down through the years former mountain climbers had been caught just here in the clouds and one or two had left such books as they had brought along for future climbers' perusal. Whittier's "Snowbound" would

have described us more adequately than any other book we thought of. In the evening—and the evening came early—we took the rubber sheets, the canvas bed coverings, and any material that could be spared and stuffed the cracks of all the doors and windows. The wind was wild. The entire outfit of woolen changes we had brought we put on simultaneously and then, hugging the fire, we perused the books at hand.

We found one book, *An Affair of State*, which some politically ambitious mountain climber had left. It was a tale of Great Britain and the intrigues of prime ministers and men of statecraft. Sitting there in this mountain dugout in front of snapping hemlocks, reading by a candle light, we felt a million miles away from any Western government or Eastern government as well. The smoke made long periods of reading impossible and so we went to bed longing again for a bright day on the morrow. But the second day came and yet the clouds played about us. The doings of the prime minister were fascinating, but it was interesting to see how insignificant they became when there was a slight promise of sunlight. In the midst of our reading the Saheb would discover a patch of sunlight on the floor. Out we would run, but no sooner had we reached the foot of the hill than the cloud had dimmed it. In again to straighten out the tangle in which the prime minister was caught. Another patch of sunlight appeared. Another breathless dash to the possible lifting of the clouds to see the most marvelous view in the



THE SHRINE OF BUDDHA  
Showing the seats for the Lamas at the right and left





world. The patches of sunlight came oftener. We donned raincoats and ran up the hill, but our fast-beating hearts halted us.

"There is blue sky," shouted Naspatis. We turned in all four directions at once to look at a bit of blue sky—the first we had seen for days.

"There, yonder, see how thin is the veil of cloud—the glory is just above that."

The wind drove by faster and faster. Our ears were frost bitten. The wind blew us from one position to another but our eyes were glued to the heavens.

"The blue grows larger," we screamed to each other. Yonder are billowy clouds, and farther beyond in a sea of clouds rise the hills. The sun looked like a white disk but as long as there was a bit of blue anywhere we stood freezing but hopeful. The strong wind blew and the patch of blue remained the same. We walked this way and that way, longing, hoping, praying that just here the blue would break through and show us the greatest view in the world.

The hours of expectancy passed, the disc of the sun was darkened, the blue was covered with a curtain of cloud and we were again imprisoned in cloud. We were in the hands of a force greater, more elemental, and more terrible than we could realize.

How little and far away and unimportant seemed the complications of forming a new government in London in contrast to the strength and grandeur of nature's changes!

## PRAYER FLAGS

Our disappointment was evident. We had taken the trip—this part of it—to see the wonder view of the world. The coolies had trudged up the steep mountain-sides carrying food for themselves and us that we might see the view. We had studied to prepare ourselves for the deepest appreciation of it. The entire camp shared our disappointment. In the middle of the afternoon as we were out exercising to keep fit we saw an interesting picture. Naspati walked in front and one of the smaller syce boys just behind him. The clouds blew now and then so that we could see them as silhouettes walking. The boy carried a small lighted incenser in one hand and in the other bamboo poles. Half way up the hill we caught another glimpse. The Tibetan turned about, took the poles and incenser from the hand of the boy and thereupon dismissed him and ascended the summit alone. We went very near to catch any glimpse the driving wind might give us and we saw a marvelous thing. Our devout friend was in prayer. He held the incenser high—then placed it on the ground and with bared head knelt to the East and prayed over the fires, knowing that his prayers would be wafted heavenward heavy with the smoke from the incense. He turned west, then south, and then north. After this, with great ceremony he planted the bamboo poles. The wind pulled them up. He dug a deeper hole for them and then tied on to each pole a large white cloth on



A MENDONG—A TIBETAN WESTMINSTER ABBEY  
Carvings of great sayings on the rocks



which he had printed his prayer. As he turned to descend from this holy hill he looked with satisfaction to see the white flags flapping in the wind, for Naspati knew that the horses of the wind would gallop swiftly with his prayers to heaven and they would the sooner be answered. We were deeply touched that our Buddhist friend should pray so exceptionally for us—that the clouds would lift for us—and we easily fell to prayer and joined ours with his for a better day on the morrow—and for a glimpse of the wonder view.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GREATEST VIEW IN THE WORLD

WITH the white prayer flags still flapping in the breeze we broke camp at Sandakphu, believing that if we might but reach Phalut there would be a greater possibility of seeing the answer to our prayers. We left in a blizzard. The blinding storm was all that could be imagined in a driving cloud over twelve thousand feet above the plains. Round about us, though we could not see them, giant pines were sighing out a lovely sea symphony. During the day as the wind abated and the clouds broke we saw the tapestry covering the lower mountains. It was made of the foliage and flowers of the rhododendron trees and covered so much of the scenery that it seemed unreal.

About three-thirty in the afternoon the tinkle of a cow-bell (the chokidar kept a cow) told us we were nearing our caravanseraï. The cloud was still too dense to make out the outlines until within twenty feet of it. Our feet were cold and stiff. All day long on the march we had not passed one human being, not one hut, not so much as a domestic animal.

The sunset gave us promise of our view on the morrow. The Bawarchi, his helper, the Masalji, and the





EVEREST—THE MONARCH OF THE SNOWS  
Showing the shoulders which the climbers reached in 1923





coolie women were devoutly saying their beads. They had even taught little Hindu Buddu how to mumble the prayers. The retinue had not fully enjoyed spending four days at Sandakphu, imprisoned in the clouds, and wished to be getting forward on their journey. So rosaries were counted with murmuring voices. Prayer wheels were turned and loud "Om Mani Padmi Hungs" could be heard rolling forth from their sleeping quarters. The cook followed Naspatis example and went with incense and flags to the top of the hill. The atmosphere of the camp was electric with expectancy. For these things gave our retinue faith that the morrow would be clear, while we looked at the reddening sky and felt assured that the morning would give us our longed-for wonder view.

True to his promise Naspatis rapped loudly at our door at four-twenty. It seemed the dead of night. The cold was bitter.

"Saheb," he called, "Heaven has heard our petition and the sky is aglow with his answer. Arise, come to the hilltop. The glory of heaven and earth is before you."

We jumped to our feet, lighted the candles, put on all the remaining clothes we possessed—for we had slept in the majority—and ran as fast as the altitude would permit, to the mountain. Naspatis met us on the hilltop, reached for our hands and gave us a lift up the last difficult step with the command, "Saheb, close your eyes. Memsahab, your eyes should be closed."

So with closed eyes, and with his hand in ours he turned us back to back, the Saheb to the east and I to the west.

"Now open them," commanded our mild-voiced friend. And—before us stretched infinity! From west to east unmatched whiteness filled the sky. Only one third of the horizon showed human greenness. The light of the morning sun was caught by the peak of Everest—a head that rises lonely in pure and naked whiteness to the unrivaled height of six measured miles. Lower down, his shoulders caught the colors and we saw the height to which the brave, intrepid climbers reached and failed. Some day, proud head of Everest, you too will have to bow to the human yoke, as did your shoulders to the brave young men of 1923.

The whole northern sky line from the rising brilliant sun in the east around to the gray blue west was one giant range of snowpeaks, glaciers ages old, like a vast winter ocean caught at the crest of the waves and frozen. The lights of the sun grew stronger and more courageous as they touched one glorious peak after another.

We were experiencing the most sublime dawn of our lives. Everest, in all her isolated grandeur, came first, and next the chameleon-like and fascinating Kanchenjunga, lacking only a few hundred feet of Everest's height. Yonder was Makalu, three hundred feet below Kanchenjunga, but all soaring into the sky over five miles. We stood at Phalut, twelve thousand feet, ap-



WE DWELL IN ICY GRANDEUR



proaching the height of the Matterhorn, and yet to see the proud heads of these snowy monarchs we must from that height look up four miles above us into the heavens.

As we stood on this sacred spot we were awed into silent realization that we were beholding the three highest points of earth, in which God had chiseled in ice the word "eternity." No sound marred our worship. No petition fell from our lips; our souls, that had been aglow with expectancy, now expanded in wonder and praise as we hymned the Creator.

No human being lived here. Miles down the valleys would be found their dwellings. Here was sacred ground.

After hours of silence a solitary eagle, silent and majestic, floated out over the valley. We watched it until it became a tiny black speck upon the horizon.

The cook called us to breakfast but we were held spellbound on the hilltop. Once in a life time one is permitted a glimpse of the eternal and we waited before this grandeur as before the altar of God to receive a blessing. When at last we turned, the Saheb said, "Here I have received a blessing and here I'll raise my Ebenezer." And forthwith he began to collect stones for its building. It was very easy to explain this idea to our Buddhist helpers, for when they have received a blessing they immediately express it by building a stone *chorten*. When the Saheb had finished and kneeled to pray beside his Ebenezer, the devout Naspati stood reverently in deep sympathy. As we turned to go down

the hill, it was clear that Naspati wished to talk and we were eager to hear what he had to say.

“Saheb,” he began, as usual, to make sure that he had our complete attention, “that proud head yonder that looks into heaven itself, you white people have named Everest. That is not his name. His real name is Choomalangana. He has always been there, keeping guard over the gate of heaven,” he concluded; and then, quickly continuing and turning to me as though in fear of interruption: “and, Memsahab, you must hear the story of Kanchenjunga.”

To confess the truth I had loved Kanchenjunga more than Everest, and I was enraptured to hear the story from this mystic’s lips.

“It was in the days of long ago,” Naspati began, slowly and in such style that we knew we should have the real story, “when the vault of heaven opened now and then and the humans of earth were enabled to talk with God face to face and catch a glimpse of heaven. On one such occasion when the vault of heaven opened, a beautiful goddess found herself so near to the edge that she was enabled to look down upon earth. It was her first glimpse of this sphere, and as she looked down she grew more and more fascinated. Down among the trees something very interesting was moving about. It was a lovely human boy. So human he was and so charming that she realized even heaven would not be a place of happiness unless the lovely human boy were there as her companion. As the vault of heaven opened



wider and wider she was possessed with desire to draw the boy up into heaven beside her.

"Now, *kinchna* means 'to pull' in the language of Hindustan, and *junga*, from which we have our word 'jungle,' means 'the earth.'

"So, being an imperious goddess and one who would not easily give up her desires, she leaned over to the very earth where the human boy was and 'kinch-ed' the junga and pulled the earth up to the very vault of heaven. As it approached her, the human boy leaped from the peak of earth into the lap of heaven, and there they have lived happily ever since. While the earth which she 'kinch-ed' was taken so near to heaven that it became solid ice and has remained there as a long stepping-stone from that time even unto to-day. When the boy is weary of heaven"—this with a twinkle in his eye—"he has a ladder by which to come back to earth. That is Kanchenjunga," he finished, with a flourish and a sweeping gesture toward the most beautiful mountain in the world.

As I looked at her again she was all aglow with the roseate morning light, her cheeks blushing pink and her ears burning red. Kanchenjunga had been eaves-dropping and had heard her praises sung.

May first, nineteen hundred and twenty-five—a day of all great days surpassing.

"Eggs, three quarters boiled?" asked the Bawarchi.

"Yes, three quarters boiled," we answered, and went in to break our fast.

## SUNSET AT SANDAKPHU

The sun goes down in golden mist  
While the rays of dying light  
Burn and shine from west to east  
Against the peaks of white.

An oriole on a sprig of gray  
Whistles a lonely call,  
While silently the fading day  
Spreads twilight over all.

My soul is all aglow with God;  
The earth and sky and air  
Are full of him, while e'en the cloud  
Declares that he is there.



PROUD KANCHENJUNGA STILL STANDS AS THE STEPPING STONE TO THE  
VAULT OF HEAVEN



## CHAPTER X

### FROM THE HEIGHTS OF GOD TO THE VALLEYS OF MEN

WE broke camp silently, never unconscious of the presence of the white vastness stretching out and up before us. We left on foot. Our long, hard descent into the valleys of men would begin. We had played in God's Gardens. We had heard God's voice in the clouds. We had seen his face on the heights. Not long after our march began that day, we caught sight of a beautiful oriole perched courageously out on a far limb. The Saheb doffed his hat, and hand in hand we stood on the shaded mountain path red, velvet with the petals of rhododendron leaves, while he prayed. I called it a prayer of trust:

"Thanks, swaying, singing mountain bird! How intrepid thou art, trusting thy weight to that tender twig! The tree that shelters thee leans far out over the cliff. A thousand feet of canyon yawn beneath thee, but thou art unafraid. And the morning sun sets thee to singing. Teach us thy song. Give us thy trust. Let us swing out our lives over human depths, trust our weight to nature's laws, and, never fearing, sing the song of our true instincts. Custom and convention have so hedged us in, tradition has so restrained us, other

people's beliefs have so stifled us! Oh, set us free to trust, and sway, and sing! Art thou tiny? Thou art bigger than the tree that holds thee, greater than the mountain which bears the tree, vaster than the valley beneath thee. Give our tiny hearts thy greatness."

Hour upon hour that first day we were in sight of the great view. It was like looking at the sun, and carrying a sun spot in our retina, blinding every other thing. We could not see the green hills below, or the rhododendron forest or the billowy clouds. Until the view had faded, it blinded all other sights.

#### A PRIMITIVE WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Often in our journey downward we would pass Buddhist mendongs.

Most of the mountain folk have followed the Hindu custom of burning the dead soon after death. We passed often a spot where a body had recently been cremated. The family comes and sits in silence while the flames carry away the body of their loved one. After this takes place the ashes are thrown behind a stone, and the loved ones carve the stone and put it into place in the mendong. This looks like a casual pile of stones, but they are firmly put together, and often beautiful sentiments are written thereon. On some, only the great words "Hail to Thee, Perfect One of the Lotus" appear. Every devout hill Buddhist on coming to a mendong, will walk seven times around it in silence and prayer.



THE SAHEB RAISES HIS CHRISTIAN EBENEZER WITH BUDDHIST ASSISTANCE





## A MOUNTAIN CAIRN

One of the highest points we reached was Singalela, well over twelve thousand feet. Like every sightly spot in Japan, China, and the Himalayas, the Buddhists have captured this one and have made this point a shrine of devotion. On the old moss-decorated stones of the simple cairn are copper, nickel, and silver coins. Heavy-burdened coolies stop here to make an offering and to say a prayer. On bended knee, then with forehead on the ground, and hands folded in Gothic style they worship. One is mystified to know whether the bold-white peaks, the cairn, or the God they express is the object of adoration. Naspati gathered his party about him and while devoutly kneeling he lighted little dried bamboo sticks on which he sprinkled sweet-scented incense. Then in a sing-song cry he led his flock of humble folk in congregational worship. And while the incense rose, the whole company tied white, soft, new, thin muslin on bamboo poles and lifted them to their utmost height upon the cairn, building stones about them to keep the poles in place—the Buddhist prayer flag. How easily and loftily they float over Sikhim and Nepal and Tibet toward heaven! How crude in custom, and yet one reveres devotion wherever he finds it!

## THE LEECH IS A DEADLY THING

We were stopping at midday by a Buddhist stupa for

lunch. It was a fine, level plot covered with grass, and it invited us to sit down.

"Leeches," cried the Bawarchi. The cry had a note of warning in it.

Leeches, to be sure, were crawling on the soles of our shoes. They were on our food baskets. We forthwith began to use up all the salt we had brought with us, scattering it on these little, powerful, squirming creatures. Salt is their greatest enemy. The instant it touches them, they shrivel and die. A leech is a worm one and a half inches long, very thin and with a pointed head. He crawls like a measuring worm and has the faculty of getting into very small places. His boring quality is equal to his brass. Once there, he sucks the blood of his victim until he himself dies of overfeeding. Food was no longer inviting. I was too busy watching our shoes and defending ourselves from this little worm, and with a stick we took off many. But one got the better of us. For hours the Saheb walked unaware that one of these insolent little creatures was sucking his blood through the buckle on his puttee, and not until he felt weak did we discover it, and many a year he will still bear the mark of it.

Down through these valleys and forests our only enemy is that little inch-long leech. No wild animals are to be feared because they cannot live where the blood-sucking leech lives. The forests look so innocent and so inviting, but down under the dead leaves like a haunting criminal lying in wait for his victim crawls



THE SAHEB STUDIES THE TERRACED FIELDS ON THE MOUNTAINSIDES



the deadly leech, the actual underground ruler of the forest.

#### FROM ICY HEIGHTS TO SUN-KISSED VALLEYS

In one short march of fourteen miles we left our icy grandeur, that was austere and cold, and came to the human warmth of the sun-kissed valleys and low hills. There has always seemed to me something human about small mountains. They seem more understandable. I can move in and out among them. They are the home folk. So it seemed that day like Old Home Week. We made a descent of nine thousand feet, and we were welcomed back to the world of trees by the tender bamboo, who bowed his head to greet us; welcomed to the world of flowers by the awkward, homey jack-in-the-pulpit; to the world of rivers by the noisy, sociable Rungeet, that was even then tumbling over rocks and stones in a race to keep up with itself; welcomed to the world of birds by the bulbul's liquid note.

An occasional hermitage caught between rocks on the hillside showed us that the Buddhist hermits too preferred the valleys of man.

#### VALLEYS OF MEN

And when the trickling streams made us realize we had come to hillsides packed with gardens, and tea gardens, rough hillsides made to bloom with the hard, loving toil of each generation, we thanked God we were again among men. We loved them. The Lepchas with

their unkempt hair had a smile of welcome. The field men and women with knives in their belts for their own protection had our admiration. The happy children, whose school is the field and whose diploma is hard toil, we loved, and we answered their smiles, glad to be back among our kind. The lambs, the goats, chickens, even the crow, sounded homey to us, and we were glad for every noisy living thing.

### TEA GARDENS

The last day after leaving the radiant valley of Dentsam was a climb up again to the Place of the Thunderbolt. We had descended into the valley as low as twenty-five hundred feet above sea level. The heat was difficult, but a little of it was like a welcome blanket. Crossing the Rungeet and the Kulhait Rivers, we noticed the ponies had not wearied. They scented home, and they ran uphill, scarcely waiting for a drink of water. The valley was hot, and we were winding our way through the greatest tea plantations in the world. Tea to the right of us, tea to the left of us, but not a drop to drink—tea plants sixty years old, and bearing yearly. Scattered here and there among the bushes were the lovely Gurkha women with the baskets hanging on their heads, picking tea with both hands. As we pass they scarcely lift an eyelash, for they must pick between eighty and a hundred pounds of leaves a day. They began as tiny children five and six years old, and so expert have they become that they





THE HILL WOMAN PICKS A HUNDRED POUNDS OF TEA A DAY



never leave a bush ruined. From each stalk the picker must pick two leaves and a bud, thereby leaving three leaves on each tender stalk.

The English tea planter told me if I went in to begin to learn to pick now, I could probably bring in four or five pounds a day. My respect for my Gurkha sister grew, as I saw her basket filled time after time during one day.

From May to November every bush on every hill as far as eye can see or as bird can fly must be plucked every two weeks.

The leaves my Gurkha friend picks are sent all over the world. O tea drinkers who daintily turn the little paper tag outside your tea pot with satisfaction, and read "Orange Pekoe," please pause a moment to think of this lonely Gurkha woman who, since she was five years of age, has been all day with a basket hanging on her head, training her fingers to be skillful enough to pluck your tea.

### THE EYRIE

The ponies ran toward the hill around Birch Hill road, down to the cryptomeria trees of old Mount Hermon, and on to the Eyrie, nestling among them. Smoke was rising from the chimney. Kemal, our faithful servant, had expected us. The grapevine telegraph announced it, no doubt, and there was a crackling, welcoming grate fire inviting us in. There were the orchids, the trees, and the smiles of our devoted helpers.

The eagles came homing tired but happy to be again in their blessed Eyrie.

We lingered long over our last breakfast out in the open-air canopy, with Kanchenjunga rising majestically before us. Duties on the plains called us and we were to repeat the same beautiful journey down the mountain on the tiny railway; and once there, we should be busy with the varied and interesting but challenging problems of India. We had had our mountaintop experience. Unfortunately, every experience from now on must be compared to, or contrasted with it. But greater than comparison or contrast, will be the carrying over of that mountaintop experience to the plain tasks of the plains.

## GLOSSARY

*Bastar*—A native state in south central India. Bastar in the native tongue means “shade of Bamboo.” The founder of the state spent much time in bamboo groves—hence the name. The present queen is Rani Profulla Kumari Devi.

*Caravanserai*—A rude inn where caravans rest.

*Chotahazri*—Little breakfast, or early tea at bedside.

*Chokidar*—Watchman or caretaker.

*Chorten*—An especially sacred stupa or Buddhist shrine, usually built of stone.

*Darjeeling*—The most famous hill station in India. Summer capital of Bengal. The word *Darjeeling* in the native tongue means “The Place of the Thunderbolt.”

*Ghi* (ghee)—Clarified butter, of the consistency of olive oil.

*Hookah*—An Oriental pipe with a long tube attached to a jar of water. The smoke passing over the liquid is supposed to attain a more mellow flavor.

*Jagdalpur*—Capital of Bastar state.

*Lamasery*—A Tibetan Buddhist monastery, sometimes called a *Gompa*, which means literally “A Solitary Place.”

*Lepchas*—Members of an aboriginal hill tribe, racially related to the Tibetans. Inhabitants of Sikkim.

*Maharajah*—Maha, great; Rajah, king.

*Maharani*—Maha, great, Rani, queen.

*Mahwa*—The sap of an Indian tree. When fermented it forms an intoxicating drink.

*Mali*—A gardener.

*Maryia*—A jungle tribe.

*Masalji*—Second cook, or dishwasher.

*Memsahab*—Properly Memsahaba—Feminine for Sahab.

*Mendong*—A burial place for Buddhist saints.

*Muezzin*—A Moslem crier of the hour of prayer.

*Punkah*—A fan, usually a long piece of matting fastened to a pole suspended from the ceiling. A rope through a little hole in the wall is pulled by a servant who sits cross-legged in the shade of the outside verandah.

*Raj*—Government or kingdom.

*Sadhu*—An Indian ascetic; usually a mendicant preacher.

*Sahab* (Sahib)—The title used by Indians when speaking to or of a European gentleman. From the early days of the East India Company up to a generation ago, the title was always spelled with an "e." In later years the use of "i" has become quite common. Now and then in India one hears a rumor that the use of "e" signifies "master," while the use of "i" signifies power without nobility. Both forms are correct.

*Sari*—The dress of an Indian lady. It consists of one piece of delicate cloth from four to six yards long and about one yard wide. It is draped in such fashion as to make both skirt and blouse, while the end is thrown gracefully over the head. It is the world's most charming costume for women.

*Sikhs*—Followers of the great Indian prophet Nanak, founder of the eclectic religion in northwest India called Sikh. They are mostly Punjabis or Rajputs by race. This interesting religion has about three million adherents.

*Sirdar*—A governor, manager, or foreman.

*Stupa*—A monument covering a sacred relic of Buddha.

*Syce*—A groom.

*Tiffin*—Luncheon.

*Toddy*—From the Hindi *tari*, the juice of the palmyra palm. In general use it applies to the fermented sap of various Indian plants.















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